

CHRISTIANITY
BETWEEN SUNDAYS

GEORGE HODGES



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1914

CHRISTIANITY BETWEEN
SUNDAYS.

CLASSBOOK OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY
EVERYMAN'S RELIGION
CHRISTIANITY BETWEEN SUNDAYS
THE HERESY OF CAIN
THE BATTLES OF PEACE
THE HUMAN NATURE OF THE SAINTS
THE PATH OF LIFE
IN THIS PRESENT WORLD
THE YEAR OF GRACE (2 Vols.)

THE CROSS AND PASSION
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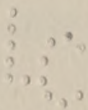
CHRISTIANITY BETWEEN SUNDAYS.

BY

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NEW REVISED EDITION



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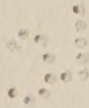
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DEDICATION.

ISALAH'S WIFE is called the "prophetess," perhaps because she helped him with his sermons. No doubt but she gave him her inspiring sympathy and her wise advice.

Some of the critics, who are so much interested in making out that nearly every chapter in the Old Testament was written by two or three different people, may some day discover for us how many good things in Isaiah's sermons are due to the suggestions of his wife.

The best of this book belongs to my wife, to whom I most lovingly dedicate it.

CALVARY CHURCH RECTORY,
Pittsburg, 1892.

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THE CREDENTIALS OF CHRISTIANITY.

“THE blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”

Jesus, when he said that, stood face to face with two of the worst miseries of humanity—misery of mind and misery of body. On the one hand was a group of men who had asked a question. “Art thou he that should come,” they wanted to know, “or do we look for another?” You see how that question touches the heart of Christianity. The supreme fact that differences Christianity from all the other religions of history is the fact of the life and character of Jesus. The essential assertion of Christianity is the assertion that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed he that should come, and that we need look for no other. That question set a doubt upon the central article of the Christian creed. These men were unbelievers.

On the other hand was a considerable company of people, some blind, some lame, some lepers, some deaf, some mourning the dead, and all of them, probably, poor. These people represented pain and poverty.

We have no greater problems in the world to-day than the problem of doubt and the problem of poverty. These two great questions, like the enigma of the Sphinx, demand solution. And we must somehow answer them, or pay the fearful penalty. Doubt threatens the Church, poverty threatens the State. Jesus Christ stood face to face with both these problems, and answered them in the words that I have quoted.

The unbelief, in this instance, came from John the Baptist. These doubters were messengers of his, and that great question was his question. Even the forerunner had fallen from the faith.

Much of this unbelief of John's was due, no doubt, to physical conditions. John was in prison. He was shut up in a black fortress of Herod's, over in Moab, on the borders of the Dead Sea. That imprisonment itself, John felt naturally enough, meant the real end of all his work. Those great walls which shut out the sun and the sky stood straight across the path of the prophet's future. Thus far was he to go, and no farther. Jesus was to increase, and he was to decrease—

John had already accepted that. But this meant failure. It seemed, no doubt, to John, as it seemed in the old days to Elijah, that his life had been in vain. And he wondered, perhaps, if it had not been a tragic mistake even from the beginning. Had he, after all, been the forerunner of the Messiah? This man of Nazareth, was he really the Holy One of Israel? Was he the Christ, or do we look for another?

And all that depression was deepened by John's bodily weakness. No man resorted to that frowning prison for his health. Whoever was shut up in one of those damp cells lost more than liberty; he lost health with it. The chances are that John was sick. That was the beginning of it. His body was out of order, and that set his mind out of order. First disease, then depression, and then doubt.

Almost everybody knows how that is. A great deal of unbelief is not the real voice of the man. We are greatly troubled; we are in a morbid and weak condition of body, and we seem to be getting every day farther away from God; the sky gets black over our head, prayer becomes only a formality, and faith seems to be dying. But the real trouble is that we are not ourselves. We are like one of those blind people who stood that day by the side of Jesus, and could not see

his face. He was there, and God's beautiful bright world was there also, but these men were blind. Pretty soon they got better, and saw clearly.

What we need when we fall into this kind of unbelief is not the parson, but the doctor. It is not theology that we need, but medicine. The best plan is to realize the conditions; to recognize the fact that even the spirit, in this life, depends upon the body, and that what is really the matter with us is not lack of faith, but lack of health; and so to use the right remedies, if we can find them, and to go out into the pure air, and to regain our strength. We will find that strength of faith will return with it.

Some of this unbelief of John's, however, may have been due not so much to depression as to disappointment. John the Baptist was a man whose life was devoted to one single purpose. His business was to prepare the way for the Messiah. That great ideal hero and deliverer, toward whose coming the hopes of the Hebrew people had been turned for centuries, had at last come. And it was appointed to John to find him and make him known. Naturally, during those years that he had spent solitary in the desert, he had meditated on the character and work of the Messiah day after day. He had elaborated his

ideal of the Christ. He had made up his mind what sort of being he would be. And then when the real Christ was set beside this ideal Christ of John's, John may have been disappointed. Somehow Jesus of Nazareth disappointed almost everybody's preconceived idea. The whole Jewish nation was anticipating quite another character of Christ. They were grievously disappointed, so much so that they rejected Jesus altogether. But it is quite possible that nobody was more disappointed than John the Baptist.

For our ideals are little more than our own selves mirrored, and bettered, and magnified. The ideal Messiah, as John had imagined him, was a great, emphasized, bettered, and perfected John. John the Baptist, to take only one illustration, was pre-eminently the teacher of repentance. The fact in human life on which he dwelt was the fearful fact of sin. He urged all men to instant decision for or against God. And to quicken that decision he preached the dreadful penalties of sin, taught the wrath of the righteous God, and pictured the agonies of hell. If he could have had his way, he would have turned the whole world into a great universal revival meeting. And when Jesus came, speaking quietly and gently, not making any great stir in society, preaching the gospel of growth, teaching the love

of God, and emphasizing the fatherhood of God rather than the judgeship of God, John was disappointed. Could it be possible that Jesus of Nazareth was really the Messiah for whose coming he had been sent to prepare the way? The question turned itself over and over in his mind there in the solitude of his prison: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

Or perhaps John was like Judas, and was in a hurry, wanted the kingdom of God to come right off, looked every day for some sudden spectacular manifestation of the Messiahship of Jesus, and looked vainly, and so from disappointment passed to doubt.

Anyway, we are most of us able to sympathize with John. A great deal of the unbelief that we meet in the streets and that we experience in our own hearts to-day grows, just as John's did, out of disappointment. There are thousands of people who are disappointed, may we not say, in God. They have an ideal of God. God is the superlative of which they themselves are the positive. "If I were God," they say, or think, "oh, what a revolution I would set a-going down here in this misguided world! There would be an instant end to all oppression. Whoever raised his hand to strike an unjust blow, lightning out of the clear sky should smite him. There would be a

sudden ceasing of all sorrow. No more pain, no more death—all crying done away. All the good people should have all the good health and all the good money. While doubt should be made impossible by the writing of the creed of God in great letters of cloud and fire across the blank page of the sky.” And because God does not do that, does not manage the affairs of the universe quite as we would (seeing, possibly, the reasons of things somewhat deeper and better than we do), people, coming into contact with some of the more tragic phases of God’s dealings with men, are most grievously disappointed. Nobody, I think, will deny that. People are disappointed in God. And because they cannot understand him, they fall into doubt, as John did. And they wonder, sometimes, if in such a misguided universe—as they conceive of it—there is any God at all.

But the trouble in the case of John the Baptist was altogether with John. If John did not understand Jesus, and was disappointed in him, that, we see very clearly, was John’s fault. And it may be our fault, also, or our ignorance, when we are in the same way disappointed in God, and fall to questioning and doubting God.

Whether the cause was depression or disappointment, John the Baptist had fallen into

doubt. And somehow getting communication in his prison with some of his disciples, he sent them to Jesus, asking this question about his Messiahship. And Jesus, confronted with this group of questioners and doubters, proceeded at once to answer them, not by any argument, not by any assertion, but by the witness of his works. He set these men from John at his right hand and bade them look and listen; and then he went on doing what he was always doing and saying what he was always saying; and after a little while, turning to the company of unbelievers, he told them simply to go and tell John what they had seen and heard; to go home and think about the actual experiences of that hour with Jesus, and to tell John. "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." That was the answer that Jesus gave to the representatives of doubt.

The Church of Christ stands to-day just where Christ stood. On the one hand is unbelief, and on the other hand are pain and poverty. Men are coming constantly with that old crucial question: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" That question touches, as I said, the very heart of Christianity. The finality

of Jesus of Nazareth, the supremacy of Jesus of Nazareth—this is what men are asking about to-day. They want to know if the Christian religion is the final, the supreme, the divine religion, or shall we look for another? What are the grounds for accepting and believing Christianity? What are the credentials of Christianity?

And the answer to the question, if we are to return an answer that shall be persuasive and convincing, must be not an argument, not an assertion, but such a sight as Jesus showed. Men must see our good works: then we may expect them to glorify our divine Master, and our Father which is in heaven. The credentials of Christianity are not creeds but deeds. Wherever the Christian religion has ceased to be helpful, men have ceased to believe in it; and rightly, because there it has ceased to be Christian. But wherever Christianity has been able to bid men look, as Jesus did, and see the sorrows of the world comforted, and the wounds of the world bound up, and the good news of the gospel carried, with light and hope in it, to the hearts of the poor, there the Church has won allegiance, and will always win allegiance.

If we desire to minister to the misery of doubt and to do it in the Master's way, we must begin

by ministering to the miseries of pain and poverty. Jesus Christ, standing between these two great problems of our age, solved the one by solving the other. He addressed himself to the bettering and uplifting of the poor. And the blessed works which he did made all the answer he gave, or needed to give, to the difficulties of the doubters.

Whoever is himself in doubt about the Christian faith will find more help in charity than in theology. Let him not rely so much upon the reading of many Christian books, as upon the doing of many Christian works. Let him simply try day after day to live like a Christian and he will presently find himself believing like a Christian. Obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge. Whoever does the will of God shall know the truth of God. John the Baptist had faith enough so long as he was busy at his blessed work of helping people. It was only when he was shut up in prison, and had no chance to minister to men, that he fell into doubt. Try to live as Christ lived; think not of yourself, but of your brother's need; every day somehow help somebody; more and more learn the spirit of Christ; thus will you come unconsciously and inevitably into the possession of all essential Christian truth.

Whoever desires to be a missionary of Christ, whoever is not content to be a Christian all alone, but wants to make some one else Christian, will find the sermon that Jesus preached to be the most effective sermon.

If you wish to bring some member of your own household into closer relations with religion, it is not a good plan to talk a great deal. Urging people to attend church effects but little toward making Christians out of them. It is better to do a great deal. It is better to be the very best kind of Christian that you can seven days out of every week. Your thoughtfulness, your patience, your Christian good-temper, your check upon your tongue, your constancy in your personal duty of prayer, of Bible-reading, of attendance upon the services of the church, your everyday helpfulness, your unfailing ministering to the happiness and bettering of all about you, your deeds of charity, your Christian conversation—this is better than all the persuasion in the world. If you want your husband, or your wife, or your brother to be a Christian, be a ten times better Christian your own self.

It can hardly be said too often that a large proportion of the infidels of the Christian world owe their unbelief to the inconsistent lives of people professing Christianity. When the devil

wants to send a missionary to preach the gospel of the pit, he gets a Christian. Many a Christian woman has kept a soul out of the Church of Christ by her pride, by her arrogant manner, by her injustice, by her unkind speech. Many a Christian man has made a good bargain for his bank account and a bad bargain for the Lord Jesus Christ and for his own soul, at the same time. Men are every day asking John's question: Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Is the Christian religion the religion of help and truth and righteousness, the divine religion which is trying to set up a kingdom of heaven down here on this sinful earth, or must we look for another? And Christ bids them stand by, just as he did in the old time, and watch, not now himself, but his representatives the Christians. And all depends on what they see. And when they behold the Christians cheating the blind because they are blind, and exulting to outrun the lame, and putting the lepers out of doors, and lying to the deaf because they cannot hear, and rejoicing in the ruin and death of their fellow-men, and preaching to the poor the devil's gospel of tyranny and oppression and extortion—do they believe? Do they come in and beg to be admitted into such a Church, and give their devout allegiance to such men's Master? "Woe

unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come"—it must needs be that men find stumbling-blocks somewhere along their paths—"but woe to that man"—and tenfold woe if he calls himself a Christian, and for a pretense make long prayers—"woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!"

All the emphasis of the Christian Church ought to be put just where the Lord Jesus Christ put it. The Church, like its great Leader, ought to go about doing good. To open the eyes of the blind, to make the lame walk and the deaf hear, to cleanse the lepers, to raise the dead, and to preach the gospel to the poor—that is what the Church is for. If the Church did that, there would be no problem of poverty at all. The men upon whose money the working classes depend for wages, the employers of labor, the owners of the tenement-houses, the lords and princes of the industrial world, are for the most part members of Christian churches. If they all had the Christian Spirit, if they were all Christians, if they all tried to deal with the problems of pain and poverty as Christ did—oh, what a revolution, what a transformation, what a foretaste of the millennium, what a realization of the kingdom of heaven!

Somehow there is a difference between the Church and Christ. We think that we want to

reach the masses. We desire to preach the gospel to the poor. But somehow the poor are not at all anxious to be preached to. We cannot persuade them into our beautiful churches. But when Jesus was here, the only trouble he had was to get away from the masses long enough to eat and sleep. He journeys far up into the coast of Tyre and Sidon, where he thinks that nobody knows him. But within an hour some poor people find him out. He cannot be hid. He takes a boat and crosses the lake of Galilee, seeking a desert place on the other side, where he and his disciples may get a day of rest. But behold, a great company of blind, and lame, and lepers, and mourners, and poor people have gone around the head of the lake and have anticipated him. And when he arrives at land, lo! this eager multitude. "The common people heard him gladly." That can hardly be said of the Christian Church to-day.

At a labor meeting in New York, the name of Jesus was applauded to the echo; but they hissed the Church. In England in the present campaign, where both parties are trying to gain the labor vote, some of the workingmen's political meetings have cursed the parsons. What is the matter? The matter is that Jesus Christ loved the poor, and that is more than can honestly be

said of the great company of Christians. Jesus gave the poor that which is more valuable and more helpful than all the money on the earth or under the earth, he gave them his attention, his thought, his sympathy, his love, his life. The matter is that Jesus Christ preached the gospel to the poor—the “gospel of the kingdom” is the whole name of it; the good news, that is, that the king of this great universe is Father of us all, the Father of the poorest man that breathes, and that we are brothers in one family. That is the gospel that Jesus preached to the poor; and he illustrated it and emphasized it by being himself the brother of the poor. We have left that gospel too long to be preached and practiced by the labor unions, the socialists, the communists.

Nevertheless, I believe that every New Year finds the world more Christian. Year by year even the Christian Church is being more and more converted to Christianity. The character of Christ, the example of Christ, is increasingly recognized as being the very heart of our religion. And we are trying more and more to put the emphasis where he put it, to bring the second commandment close up beside the first, to show our love for God by loving our brother-men.

Every year the Church is growing toward a realization of that blessed work of Jesus which

he showed to John's disciples. We are showing more of that divine helpfulness. Sociology is being studied as diligently as theology. Good works are being taught as the sign and fruit of faith. Wealth is being consecrated anew to the service of the Father in heaven. And the old reproach, the old unchristlikeness of the Church, is being taken away. God hasten it.

"Peace on earth, good-will toward men," sang the shining choir of angels over the fields of Bethlehem. We Christians ought to be the peace-makers of the world, and the promoters of good-will everywhere toward all men. It ought to be our Christian study and our Christian prayer that the kingdom of God may come in all its fullness, that the spirit of real brotherhood—which is the spirit of Christ—may more and more grow all about us, and that the Christian Church may more and more minister as Jesus did, with the ministry of love unfailing, to the miseries of pain and poverty.

BUSINESS ON CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES.

“As a nail sticketh fast between the joinings of the stones, so doth sin stick close between buying and selling.”

Some time ago I wrote a letter to a number of successful business men, asking for information. I said that I purposed to preach a sermon, one of these days, on the subject of Business on Christian Principles.

“I find it stated,” I wrote, “in a book of Professor Ely’s that a Young Men’s Christian Association in some city decided recently, after debate, that it is impossible to do business on Christian principles; and that an eminent political economist has raised the question as to whether ‘all the preaching about the necessity of righteousness in business doesn’t simply make men worse,’ on this ground, ‘that, as the business world is at present constituted, men must commit sin, and to point out to them their sinfulness only awakens a sense of guilt, and increases their sinfulness.’

“Now about all this, I know nothing. But to preach about Business on Christian Principles without some definite information would be to preach either falsehoods or platitudes. And the best way I know of is to write to several business men of my acquaintance, of whom you are one, and ask you frankly to tell me :

“1. Is it impossible to do business on Christian principles? Is it true that, as the business world is at present constituted, men must commit sin?

“2. If so, what sin, and how? What are the particular practices which are considered commercially right, but which come into opposition to Christian principles? For example, must a business man lie? Must he break the fourth commandment? Must he steal?

“3. And, in general, in your opinion, what do you think the Christian pulpit ought to do by way of bettering unchristian elements in business life? Leave them alone, except in generalities? or speak of them plainly? And, if speak of them—speak of what?”

This letter was written to about twenty men—some of them men whose names were familiar to every inhabitant of their city, the leaders of great industries, men associated with the most extensive of the concerns that have carried the

renown of the city even over the wide sea. Others were men in subordinate positions, or connected with retail houses, or owners of a small business, and thus able to look at the problem from another point of view.

The letter made its inquiry of people in many different occupations and industries. Iron and steel, oil and gas, are represented in the answers. So also is the business of the merchant, the grocer, the dealer in hardware, the newspaper man, the broker, the banker, and the commercial traveler. Some of the answers were given in extended interviews; most of them were set down in writing. Of the written answers a few were short; the majority were of considerable length, some of them being a good deal longer than the usual limit of my sermons.

As to the nature of the replies to my question, some said one thing, and some another. One letter would return an emphatic assertion of the purity of all business principles, and in the same mail there would be another letter casting suspicion upon the integrity, from the Christian point of view, of the most honest rules of commercial dealing. Some considered business in general to be Christian in its conduct, but excepted certain men, or certain branches of commercial life. Some held that business is the most Christian in-

stitution now existing in the world, maintaining that most business men are really Christian missionaries, teaching and enforcing the strictest Christian ethics. Others confessed that, from their point of view, the business world, so far from being a house of prayer, is really a great den of thieves. The quotations in my letter, these correspondents said, represented the real truth, that, as the business world is at present constituted, men are of necessity forced every day into sin.

I noticed one curious division line running through all this interesting and most profitable correspondence. The men at the head of great industries are unanimous and emphatic in affirming the absolute honesty of all decent business. But the small traders, the clerks, the commercial travelers, are not by any means so sure about that. Nearly all the negative answers came from them.

All these letters were so carefully and thoughtfully written, every one of them so suggestive and so instructive, that I am sorry that the space does not permit me to quote them all, from the first even to the last, without missing a sentence. Some of them are as good sermons as I ever heard. All that I can do is to quote sentences here and there, and to give you their main ideas,

and to make some comments upon the general subject in the light of this correspondence.

“Is it impossible to do business on Christian principles? Is it true that, as the business world is at present constituted, men must commit sin?”

“It is said,” writes one correspondent, “that there are two sides to all questions; but the question, ‘Can business be done on Christian principles?’ seems to me to have one side only. It is not only possible, but, as a rule, the most profitable, to do business on Christian principles; and I cannot admit for one moment that those principles antagonize legitimate business as the world is now constituted.”

“As we have been taught,” writes another correspondent, “that all things are possible, I must say that it is *possible* to do business on Christian principles; but when and where are very rare instances, in my humble opinion. I once heard a cashier of a now defunct bank tell a prominent business man of this city that it was impossible to get rich and be honest, except by inheritance, or ‘striking it rich’ by some lucky find. I have never been engaged in business for myself to any great extent, but I must confess that in almost every business in which I have been employed I have observed many cases of deception.”

The next writer represents one of the largest

and most widely abused corporations in this country. "In my judgment," he writes, "it is impossible to succeed in business without Christian principles, except temporarily. Therefore it is not only not impossible to do business on Christian principles, but absolutely necessary. A man who does to another in business any differently than he would be done by, is not looked upon as a first-class business man. It is not true that, as the business world is at present constituted, men must commit sin, but the contrary."

But listen to correspondent number four. "I candidly believe," he writes, "that business as at present constituted cannot be conducted on strictly Christian principles. It is exceedingly difficult to actually define just what the unchristian practices of business are, but they may be stated in a general way to be just without the pale of honesty with one's self and one's neighbor, and it is hardly possible to avoid their commission as business is at present constituted."

And with this my next correspondent agrees heartily. "My answer to your first question, I am sorry to say, is that, as the world is at present constituted, it is impossible to do business successfully on Christian principles. It is the fear of poverty that causes men to abandon Christian principles in business. The business man's com-

petitor, many times not a Christian, resorts to practices in business that are actually dishonest. That compels a professing Christian to copy them, or otherwise stare poverty in the face."

On the other hand, here are other voices: "Is it impossible to do business on Christian principles? No. Is it true that, as the business world is at present constituted, men must commit sin? No!" And another writes: "No! a thousand times no! Business men do not have to lie, steal, break any rightful command, or sin in any way, in order to be successful." Still another declares that the conducting of business on Christian principles is "the only hope of success and happiness in this life."

Other men, however, are not so pronounced. One who holds that business can be done on Christian principles admits that it is a difficult undertaking. Another, who read my letter to a considerable number of business men of his acquaintance, and reports that every one of them pleaded "not guilty," and who really pleads "not guilty" himself, yet confesses that he thought of Diogenes with his lantern looking (and not very successfully) for an honest man. One correspondent writes in this guarded way: "To your first question I would make reply that business can be, and is, done on moral, and therefore Christian,

principles by many firms and persons. By this I do not mean that perfection is attained, but that there is a fixed principle of applied integrity, and consequently no more frequent lapses than are found in ordinary mortals. I further believe that the number of erring brothers is no greater pro rata in the commercial world than in any of the learned professions, even including that of theology. I reiterate my firm conviction that business can be done on Christian principles, and that some of our most successful men have succeeded on this very line."

The reference to the clerical profession was illustrated in connection with this letter by an inclosure of a dozen clippings from the newspapers of that week, containing reports of various misdemeanors on the part of persons legally entitled to write "reverend" before their names. "Ought to be Serving Time in the Penitentiary" was the heading of one of these paragraphs. "A Bishop's Sense of Honor" was another. This same position, that the business men are fully as good as the parsons, was held by another writer, already quoted, who said: "Business life should be, may be, and probably is, as pure as the ministry; and may be, and probably is, conducted on as lofty a ground, and for as lofty ends, upon the average." And another, carrying the same battle

a little farther into the regions ecclesiastical, says this: "Nor do I know of any commercial practices that are in opposition to Christian principles; but there is a high standard of commercial integrity that business men do not look for nor expect to find in so-called religious men. This is not the fault of Christian principles. It is a fact," he concludes, "that may give you some food for thought." As indeed it does!

And yet here is an epistle as long as two sermons, which begins thus: "Your letter is at hand, and its contents noted with alarm and amazement. The subject is one on which my thoughts have repeatedly dwelt, and with no other result than pain and distressful confusion. In fact, there is little in the business world that will bear comparison with ideal standards and Christian holiness. The dominating principle in business is selfishness under the form of competition. The rule of Christianity is to love your brother as yourself. These principles evoke inevitable conflict."

Some of my correspondents, on the other hand, are so emphatic in their certainty of the Christian element in business, that they have their opinion, and that not a favorable one, of the young men whose vote was quoted in my letter. One business man thinks that they were probably boys

who knew nothing whatever about business. Another says that "no decent, honest man could suggest that business could not be conducted upon Christian principles successfully." Still another writes: "I am sorry for the young men in that Christian Association who decided in the manner they did, for it only too plainly shows the class of business associates they have had. To them I would say, Come up out of the Chatham Streets of the business world that you are in, and breathe the atmosphere of the broad-gauge, liberal, honest, and honorable avenues of the commercial world, and you will change your vote."

Thus my first question was answered by a confusion of voices, some saying "yes," and some "no": but the majority maintaining most earnestly that it is not only possible to do business on Christian principles, but that as a fact business is actually done on Christian principles, in the great proportion of commercial houses.

In this connection I read with interest a Code of Ethics, which one of my correspondents gave me in place of a written answer to my letter. This document is the report of a committee appointed by a union of employers of a certain kind of labor. It was compiled from papers read at meetings of local branches of this union held in most of the large cities of this country. It is

valuable as embodying the judgment of thousands of experienced men as to the best methods of conducting business. This Code of Ethics reads like a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount.

"We must use every effort," so the code begins, "to develop moral and intellectual manhood. We should firmly resolve to test every transaction by the standard of truth and justice. Take advantage of no man's ignorance. See that employees are truthful and straightforward, and do not misrepresent nor overcharge the confiding. We must be as honorable in every particular as we would have our competitors.

"When a young competitor enters the ranks, welcome him as a new soldier to the field, and help him to any information and assistance that will enable him to overcome the difficulties we had so much difficulty in surmounting. It should be a duty and pleasure to impart to our less experienced competitors the knowledge we possess, so long as we are satisfied that the information generously given will be honorably used. In the conduct of our establishments, it should be our constant endeavor to elevate the moral character of our workmen who are engaged with us. While it should be our firm and unalterable determination not to be dictated to by labor organ-

izations when their demands are unfair, or which substitute the will of a prejudiced majority for the conservative teachings of common sense and justice, we should be slow to condemn the action of our employees, as it is possible that the influences controlling them may be more than they are able to resist."

This Code of Ethics, it should be remembered, was not set forth for the information of the public, but was prepared and circulated among this company of employers as a private statement of the ideals in which they all agreed for the transacting of their business. I cannot imagine anything more Christian.

Nevertheless this code begins with a statement of the evils of competition. Side by side with this beautiful ideal is set a glimpse of most unsatisfactory present conditions. We are taught the nine evils, the nine deadly sins, that accompany competition in the industrial world as it is at present constituted. The first is "moral weakness," the bidder not having the courage to ask an honest price for his work. The second is "mortification and chagrin"; mortification when we miss the order, and chagrin when upon getting it we find we must lose money on it. The third evil is "envy, jealousy, and hatred of our neighbor." The fourth evil is "inadequate com-

pensation for all kinds of work." The fifth is "corruption of the customer," who plays us one against another, to our loss financial and to his loss spiritual.

Sixthly, there comes a constant "temptation to dishonesty"; we get the order at a low bid, and put in poor work to keep on the right side of the books. The seventh evil is "loss of reputation," the poor work coming to the light. "Loss of self-respect" is eighth in the list of the evils of competitive bidding. Here is what the code says under that head: "For, although the ignorance of the customer may enable the sharp bidder to impose upon him goods or work which are not up to the standard agreed upon, the bidder, who does know better, cannot quiet the still, small voice of conscience, which is continually reminding him although he bears a fair reputation in the community, he knows himself to be like a whited sepulcher." Finally the whole bad business winds up in "poor credit, bankruptcy, and ruin."

It appears, then, that there is some distance between the ideal and the real; between present conditions, at least in that particular branch of industry, and the conditions as the best men in the business would like them to be. For this code bears a very recent date; and my friend who called my attention to it informed me that

before its introduction here in Pittsburg, the competing representatives of that kind of labor were in a bitter and increasing wrangle, trying every day (commercially) to cut each other's throats.

Another business man, who did me the favor to show me in detail the entire working of his great establishment, told me that the endeavor to keep up such a local union of the representatives of his branch of trade here in this city had proved a failure.

Accordingly, answering my own first question from the information which I have gathered, it is perfectly possible for the head of any business to conduct it in an absolutely Christian way and be successful. The most Christian men I know are successful business men. And yet, a great deal of business might be a great deal more Christian than it is. The world of business is not the kingdom of heaven yet.

And here comes in my second question. Agreeing that the ideals, say of a majority of business men, are Christian, but confessing that there are nevertheless unchristian practices in business: what are these unchristian practices? This question I asked again and again, trying to get definite examples. I got a good many.

"As a nail sticketh fast between the joinings of the stones, so doth sin stick close between buy-

ing and selling." That is as true to-day as it was when it was written. Buying and selling are transactions for the making of money. And the love of money, the wise scriptures tell us, is the fertile soil in which grows all manner of iniquity. It is astounding, it is incredible, what men will do for the love of money.

People think sometimes, I suppose, that we have no further need in these days for the second commandment of the ten. We do not worship graven images. Is that true? Did any pagan worship his fetish ever more reverently, pray to it more confidently, put more trust in its power to help or harm, than some men worship, implore, and believe in the omnipotence of the minted dollar? There are not lacking examples, in every community, of men who seem to put gain in the place of everything, who think of the making of money more than they think of anything else, and who allow that thought to push out every other thought, even the thought of God.

It is possible to buy and sell with perfect honesty, without the harming in any way of any brother-man, and yet to let that buying and selling harm a man's own soul. One of the essentials, if a business man is to conduct his business on Christian principles, is to put Christianity before business, the soul before the body, to seek

the kingdom of God and his righteousness first. It is a wonder what some good business men will do with themselves in the world to come. They have never really thought of anything but buying and selling. What will they do in a world that will be as empty of buying and selling as the old temple after Jesus had expelled the traders?

No man who makes even an honest business the whole of his life, so that even Sunday is only a chance to get rested for the sake of working harder Monday morning, and the heaping up of treasure down here leaves no time for the gathering of treasure up above, and the man's heart, his real heart, is all of it in his business where his treasure is—no such man can possibly be said, except in a superficial way, to be conducting his business on principles which would be approved of by the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we think, however, of unchristian practices in business, we think more readily of such business methods as harm, not so much the soul of the man of business, as the interests of the men with whom he deals. Unfortunately, there seem to be people in this world who care more for money than they do for men, who will rob their own brothers—so it be within the letter of the law—and look on at their pain, their privation, their poverty, with a sense of absolutely in-

fernal satisfaction, rejoicing in the addition of so many dollars to their store. There are men who actually oppose themselves to the uplifting of their brother-men, and who, having the power, do persistently keep down whole multitudes of men and women and little children in conditions unspeakably degrading. I mean such men, for example, to go away a safe distance, as those two in London who own nearly all that horrible district of Whitechapel, and are responsible for the black shadow of that hideous corner of darkest England, and refuse to sell at a fair price to buyers who would transform that place of torment into something nearer paradise. I mean the tenement-house owners in New York, who have to be compelled by the courts to put in decent plumbing, and who even then appeal from court to court, putting it off as long as they can, letting their tenants in the meantime die like flies. I mean the owner of any tenement-house anywhere, where, for the sake of money, our brothers and our sisters are suffered to live in conditions that inevitably poison body and soul.

Somehow there seems to be a great deal of trouble in the world of industry. I have read about it at considerable length, and for a good while, and on both sides. I confess that I do not

understand enough about it yet to give advice. Evidently there is something wrong. Evidently there is something fearfully unchristian somewhere in a business world in which a common cab-horse is better cared for than a common man. Something is the matter where men want work, and there is no work for them to do, and for want of work they starve. Something is out of joint where men work and work and work, from the dark of morning to the dark of evening, and have absolutely nothing in their lives but work; and yet, with all that, barely get enough to keep the life in their bodies. And the whole family has to work, the mother and the little children, and yet, with all that, starvation sits every day beside the door. It seems to me that there must be something unchristian somewhere between buying and selling, when a man sells his whole life and the lives of his whole family for a mere tenth or twentieth part of what is daily wasted in many a wealthy home. And I believe that it is the duty of every man who is an employer of labor to study this problem, as he studies his account-book or his prayer-book, and try to find the Christian solution. The art of gathering a great fortune has been discovered. Now we need to know the art of perfectly just and Christian distribution.

I am more concerned, however, in this sermon with the unchristian practices of ordinary business. And here I find, as almost everywhere else in modern life, that the love of money is sharpened by keen competition. Whether a man loves money or not, he hates poverty. Every man in a small business fears to be poor. Business is a race. And in this race it is every man for himself—and poverty (if not the devil) take the hindmost. Probably there is more temptation to-day to set sin between buying and selling than ever before, on account of this fierce, unceasing, and unsparing competition.

It is competition that makes a merchant take in more orders than he can fill, and make promises that he cannot keep. He tells you that it will be done on Tuesday when he knows that it will not be finished under two weeks. That is a lie. And when you go to find the reason for the delay, he gives a reason, probably a lying reason. This is a small matter; yet a lie is never a small matter.

It is competition that persuades men to use false weights and measures. It is competition that induces men to adulterate foods and medicines and so to poison men for money; half of the drunken men are not drunk, they are drugged, poisoned, for the sake of money. The whole vast liquor business, which opens on every corner a

door into the infernal regions, which reaches out into the homes of the nation like the tenth plague of Egypt laying low the first-born, which causes more unspeakable misery than any other traffic under the sun, would be abandoned to-morrow if there were no money in it.

It is competition, and the popular eagerness to get things cheap, that puts down prices, say of clothing, lower, and lower, and lower, till you are amazed. Who loses, do you think, by these low prices which we account as gain for us? The manager of the business? Never. It is the poor seamstress, sewing and starving in the tenement-house, making calico wrappers at a dollar and a half a dozen, and neckties at twenty-five cents a dozen, and flannel shirts at twenty cents a dozen. The great majority of the "bargains" that people run after mean some sort of unchristian principle in business.

The nine deadly sins of competitive bidding make a strong illustration of the presence of unchristian elements in business. The fundamental principle of Christianity, as one of my correspondents said, is that we should love our neighbor as ourself; and that whole matter of secret competitive bidding, as it has been explained to me, with its principle of different prices to different people, is a constant and persuasive invitation to

iniquity. The buyer makes use of it to beat down the seller, to keep him in the dark as to the real conditions of the bargain, and to practice extortion upon him. I have had commercial travelers tell me that they could not possibly join the Christian Church because they could not live in their business according to its spirit. Now I know what that means. No man has a greater provocation to distrust the Christianity of the business world than the commercial traveler. On the other hand, this evil of competitive bidding tempts the seller to furnish goods of poorer quality than the specifications. These bids which I have in mind are not those that are made for the erection of buildings or of public works; they are the every-day transactions between the buyer of every commercial establishment and the men who come to get his orders.

Take this as one example. There is a great deal of steel made in Pittsburg. Some of it is made by the Bessemer process, some by the open-hearth process, some by the crucible process. Nearly the same stock is used in all these processes, but the quality of the result is very different. Now we are manufacturers, say of hatchets; and we make two grades of hatchets, one out of open-hearth and the better out of crucible steel. These hatchets look exactly alike. They look as

much alike as iron rails look like steel rails. And iron rails, I am informed, look so much like steel rails that, in the days before the Inter-State Commerce Law made it a criminal offense, reputable merchants, men of standing in the community, billed steel as iron, and so got a lower freight price from the railroad company; and by telling an absolute lie, stole just so much money from the railroad corporation. Why, I might as well go into a book-store and put a two-dollar-and-a-half book into my overcoat pocket, and tell the clerk I had taken a two-dollar book. That false billing was nothing but a combination of lying and stealing.

But to return to the hatchets. The open-hearth hatchet looks so much like the better crucible hatchet that we mark the better one with a better handle. Now comes a customer who wants to buy a large bill of hatchets. He has bought from us for several years and we want to keep his custom. But he informs us that he has a lower bid than we gave him last year. Some one will sell cheaper. What shall we do? After a little figuring we accept the bid. But the customer goes away, and we find that the crucible hatchets that he expects will be an actual loss to us. And so we quietly make open-hearth hatchets and fit them out with crucible-hatchet handles.

We ship the goods, and the customer presently discovers that the quality this year is not so good as it was last year. He writes to find out why: "Did you make those hatchets out of the same stock that I had before?" Immediately we write back, "My dear sir, we gave you exactly the same material both years." Yes, the same material, but not put through the same process! And so the man is first robbed and then lied to.

All this is the result of competition badly managed. One of my correspondents set down for me a long list of commercial lies that had come under his own observation. And all of these were misrepresentations made under the stress of competition. Business, in some of its departments, seems to be a rough-and-tumble fight for custom. One man told me that he never went to bed at night without being afraid that some competitor of his would steal his business before morning. Competition beats down prices below the honest value of the article, and the low price induces a low quality, and all sorts of sharp practices.

One business man, who says that "no one will deny that there exist unprincipled men in all occupations," but who feels "sorry for any one who claims it as a necessity," writes as follows: "The honest merchant marked his prices in plain fig-

ures, and all purchasers fared alike. This plan was so fast destroying the trade of the unscrupulous dealers that they had to adopt it, and to-day the majority of retail dealers have this system—we may say from policy rather than from principle—but the result is that the innocent purchaser does not pay the price of a good article for a poor one.” My correspondent mentions only the retail trade. I understand that this is more and more getting to be the custom in all trade. A fixed and honest figure for every class of goods, with exactly so much discount for such-and-such an amount of purchase, and such-and-such a length of time, with a possible variation according to the rating of the customer’s credit at the commercial agencies, the whole matter fairly understood and lived up to would vastly increase the proportion of Christian dealing in the business world. The passing of such a law as the Inter-State Commerce Act, with its brand of legal criminality upon unchristian practices heretofore countenanced by professing Christians, shows the need of business reformation, and indicates the growth of public opinion in a Christian direction. The formation of unions of employers, adopting such a Code of Ethics as the one from which I quoted, proves a recognition on the part of business men of unchristian elements in business

which even the Inter-State Commerce Law has not remedied, and evinces a determination, without recourse to law, to do away with these evils in their own transaction of their own business.

Several things ought, I think, to be remembered in estimating the general morality of business life. One is that there are dishonest men in business as there are in every department of human existence. And it is the dishonest men who get their names into the newspapers. A daily paper is of necessity a most unfair representation of the daily life of a community. One who should estimate our common conduct from the columns of a daily paper would set us down as a community of politicians. The man who is struck by a cable car attracts the attention of the whole neighborhood. Thousands of other people go by unnoticed. There is the same proportion between the men who deliberately lie and steal and the vast company of honest Christians who would sooner cut off their right hand.

Another matter that has been brought to my observation is the great difficulty of always distinguishing the right from the wrong. Questions of casuistry come up in every business office every day. They have to be settled immediately. Some sort of rough and approximate judgment must at once be rendered. Sometimes that judg-

ment is against equity and Christianity. But I believe that in more than nine cases out of ten the man who is in a respectable business acts as he honestly thinks just and right.

Two of my correspondents, for example, propose almost the same case, and decide it differently. The case is the amount of information which the seller ought to give the buyer in a bargain. One writer, who is one of the wealthiest and best-known citizens of his town, maintains that "we can withhold truth on proper occasions without falsifying. A reasonable construction of the principle," he says, "when applied to business transactions, requires us to regard those with whom we deal as our equals, as having equal ability and better opportunity than we have of knowing what best suits themselves. We are not therefore bound to become their guardians, or to advise them as to what we consider their best interest in the transaction. Duty to ourselves dispenses with this where it would conflict with our interests. The healthy application of the principle requires no such transcendental morality even where, in our opinion, it would be better for our customer not to make the deal. We would often be mistaken; he might be shrewder or know more than we, and society prospers better to let each attend to his own business, and

judge what is to his own interests. At the same time," adds my correspondent, "we are not allowed to hold back the truth in a manner calculated to mislead or deceive. The purchaser, under such circumstances, deals at arm's-length with the seller, and cannot complain afterward that he was cheated, in case the transaction does not turn out as he expected."

On the other hand, this is the way in which this bargain appears from the point of view to the man who lost in it. "The object of business," says this correspondent, "is to gain, and if the profit and loss shows balance on the wrong side, the business must be abandoned as a loss or sold to some one else. Now it may be doubtful morality to sell to another what you won't any longer own because you can't make it pay and perhaps the buyer can. It is not loving him as yourself. But in business that is none of your business. He looks out for himself, the law presumes he does—and the law provides a remedy through its courts only when the buyer happens to have been a lunatic or other such incapable person, or when the transaction was effected under clear misrepresentation. The shrewder man gains by the other's weakness. The sensation is not pleasant when you realize this at your cost, and you never feel quite the same toward that man afterward."

Now there are the two sides of that bargain. And there are the differing views of two honest men as to the Christianity of that transaction. I confess that my sympathies in this matter are with the second writer. The first position lends an easy opportunity to the heresy of Cain. "Am I my brother's keeper?" is not a question to which, when put directly, any of us would like to answer, "No." I doubt the Christianity of treating the buyer as an equal. I cannot imagine the Lord, as a carpenter at Nazareth, treating his customers barely as equals, and throwing all the blame of a bad bargain on their shoulders. I am sure that he would treat men not as equals (that is the language of contention) but as brothers. And I know of more instances than I like to think of where men treated as equals by Christian men shrewder than they were have come out of their losing bargains having just the feeling of which the second writer speaks, and having it not only against the man who took the money in that perfectly legal way, but against the whole Christian religion which he represents. Hard bargains at arm's-length have kept hundreds of men out of the Church of Christ.

I have spoken of the dishonest minority who have to be remembered in estimating the morality of business life. I have spoken, also, of the diffi-

culty which even the honest man finds in his endeavor to give exactly the right solution to his daily problems in ethics.

I desire now to express my sympathy with the man in the subordinate position who finds his conscience quicker than his employer's. I mean the man who is sent out to lie, or the man who is instructed to attach the wrong labels, or to misrepresent values. I have been told by some men who are eminent in business life that in their experience such men do not exist. It has been represented to me, and the argument is certainly a persuasive one, that if a man were to instruct his clerks to lie to their customers, or to take money out of their pockets, he would be simply giving them lessons in the art of dishonesty, and would have no reason to be disappointed if they applied these lessons to his own disadvantage. Evidently, if a man will lie to a customer, he will just as easily lie to his employer. The business man who told me that business men are missionaries of absolute righteousness had in view the scrupulous honesty which a good business exacts from all who are concerned in it. And I agree with him that association with some of the upright, honorable, immaculately just, and Christian business men of this city would be in itself a training in all that is best in religion, that could not be

equaled in any parish church in Christendom. In the concerns with which these men are associated there is no constraint put on any man's conscience.

Nevertheless, I know it to be a fact that in reputable industries in some places men are set tasks that cannot be done with the honest truth for a witness. And I say that I am sorry for the men who are given these tasks to do. Their daily bread depends upon their obedience. When they think of protesting, they remember their families at home. And, very often, the matter is only one of those questions of casuistry, those fine distinctions between the transcendental and the practical in ethics, which the man at the head has simply happened to decide in a way which does not meet the under man's approval. His conscience is quicker than his chief's. The employer honestly thinks, perhaps, that this questionable thing is right. Now, what shall the man do? A good many times he puts aside his scruples, persuades himself that his employer must bear the blame, thinks, perhaps, that he has a foolish and misleading conscience, and goes and writes a lie.

But according to the testimony of the best men in business, the great majority of decent business men want to do that which is unquestionably right. They are all agreed that it is better to be

honest than to be shrewd. They maintain with entire unanimity that a reputation for honorable dealing is the very best capital that a man can put into his business. It seems, then, that the best advice that can be given to any clerk, or to any employee whatsoever, when he is told to do what is against his conscience, is frankly to say so. He is to take it for granted that his employers desire to do the very most Christian thing they can. To bring his conscientious scruples to their notice is to pay them the highest tribute of respect, and also to commend himself in the surest way to their esteem. If, however, this does not prove in actual experience to work, the meaning is that the young man has the misfortune to serve dishonest men. And that means that he is engaged in a business that is bound sooner or later to come to disgraceful failure. The law of certain retribution for dishonesty is just as sure as the law of gravitation. The sooner he gets out of that falling building the better.

But if he has to face starvation! If he has a choice to make between a lie and a loaf of bread, if he has a choice to make between pain of body and pain of soul, he must make it. No one need expect to find it altogether easy to be a Christian. In the past, men have many times found it necessary to choose between being Christians and be-

ing put to a painful death. And they have made their choice. Many a man has died rather than lie. All honor, now and forever, to the noble army of martyrs. Still that army marches on. And day by day, good men and brave men, of whom the world is not worthy, are found willing to enlist in the great fight of the hosts of God against the allies of the devil, and to enlist for the whole war, come what may.

And so the answer to the second question of my letter, "Must a man, in order to be successful, lie or steal?" is, "No," and "no" a thousand times repeated. The emphatic testimony of business men who have succeeded is that genuine honesty and genuine success are married together, and cannot be divorced either in this world or in the next.

As for the third question of my letter, touching the duty of the preacher, I have tried to follow the good advice of my correspondents in the writing of this sermon.

Our Lord, being asked to settle a dispute about a questionable transaction, declined. Into the addition and subtraction of the dollars and cents of that matter he refused to enter. He contented himself with laying down a deep and eternal principle, which, applied, would settle that and all other like questions. "Take heed," he said, "and

beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

How that meets this whole difficulty, and settles it, not by any outside influence, not by law, not by arbitration, but by a change in a man's own heart! The surest way to get all business conducted on Christian principles is to get all the business men converted to Christianity.

Be loyal to Christ with all your heart. Set his example before you as the unfailing pattern of your daily life. Meet the daily problems of your business as you honestly think he himself would meet them, if he sat in your place at your office desk. Try to live in your town as he lived in Capernaum, true as he was, honest as he was, loving God as he did, and loving all your brethren with that genuine love that you would like to have Christ find in your heart, and you will conduct your business—yes, and succeed in it to the uttermost—on Christian principles.

THE DRY BROOK.

“AND it came to pass, after awhile, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.”

This is a part of the story of the education of Elijah. Elijah had come over out of Gilead upon an errand from the Lord God Almighty. The people of Israel had fallen into base idolatry. They had made a spiritual rebellion. They had dethroned God. And Elijah came to bring them back into allegiance. “And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the sojourners of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word.” That was Elijah’s message. That was the beginning of his mission. And when he had said that, when he had brought that word from the living God to the rebellious king, he went away and hid himself beside this brook. And then God began to make him ready for the next part of his great work. God went on educating Elijah.

It is not likely that Elijah was ever graduated from any school, or ever read a book in all his life, not even the Bible. God is all the time educating messengers, missionaries, men and women who are to do his work in the world. That is how God does his work, by setting us to do it, and, first of all, by educating us so that we may be able to do it. Everybody has some work of God to do, and is under the education of God. And God educates us in many ways; sometimes out of the pages of books; but most of all, and always, out of that open book which is written in the universal language, to be read of all, and in which we have a lesson every day—the book of life, the book of human experience. God was teaching Elijah his lessons, not out of a dry book, but out of a dry brook.

All the land over, God was teaching terrible lessons out of the dry brooks. Everybody was in Elijah's class. Day after day, till the weeks grew into months, the sky glowed like a furnace, and the earth was parched into hot dust, and all the green things in the fields withered, and all living creatures went athirst and hungry. There was one word in every heart, and that word was "famine." Everything else was forgotten. Everybody prayed for rain.

The first thing, if you are to teach anybody, is

to get attention. Even God must have attention. And sometimes it takes a strange sight—indeed, sometimes it takes a tragedy or a famine—to get men to look in God's direction, and to listen to his voice. It did here.

These people were wholly given over to the secular side of life. They were all the time looking down, and never up. We read about the golden calves at Dan and Bethel, and about temples and groves of Baal and Ashtaroth at Samaria and Jezreel, and all that old life seems far away, and foreign, and obsolete, and altogether out of relation with the life we live to-day. But human nature does not greatly change. Names change, but the facts which lie behind them continue. Languages, customs, skies change; the center of the world moves from one land to another; outwardly there is absolute revolution, everything is different: Dan and Bethel, Samaria and Jezreel, fall into ruins, and New York and Philadelphia, Pittsburg and Chicago, take their places; and Baal and Ashtaroth are dead. But men and women meet the same temptations still and fall into the same sins. The devil wears a different dress; that is about the only difference.

The golden calves at Dan and Bethel were set up as a substitute for the old religion. That was

what they meant. They signified unrest, dissatisfaction, desire for change. Let us go no more to church; let us seek God along some other path. They were, of course, a political necessity. The northern kingdom had separated from the southern, and the northern people were no longer welcome at Jerusalem. Nevertheless, they had their own individual meaning. They represented a religious separation—that is, they stood for a condition of things with which we are perfectly familiar. They represented a distinctly modern temper. It is a characteristic of our own day, also, that multitudes of people are turning away from Jerusalem and trying to find God somewhere else, at Dan or at Bethel.

And the next step in religion in that ancient commonwealth was to build a temple to Baal and to plant a grove to Ashtaroath. A significant step! Baal was the god of business and Ashtaroath was the goddess of society—that is, among the Hebrews of King Ahab's day the worshipers of Baal were for the most part men who set business before religion, and the worshipers of Ashtaroath were for the most part women who set society before religion.

For King Ahab wanted to make money. He desired to strengthen the state. And as his tastes were for the arts of peace rather than for the

glories of war, he turned his attention to commerce. And the great commercial nation in that neighborhood in that day was Phœnicia, up on the sea-coast, having Tyre and Sidon for its ports, and sending its ships far out along the Mediterranean Sea. But the Phœnicians worshiped Baal. To be friendly with the Phœnicians meant a companionship with idolaters. And that God had forbidden. To make an alliance with Phœnicia, and to make it strong, meant a recognition of Phœnician religion. And that was a breaking of the foremost of the commandments. On the other hand, it insured commercial success. It was the path to business prosperity. That was the alternative which confronted Ahab. Shall I put business first, or the commandments of God first? And so I say that, whatever that old god Baal may have meant in Tyre and Sidon, among King Ahab's people it meant the adoration of the dollar. And that, I believe, is not an obsolete religion.

And then, to make alliance doubly strong, Ahab married Jezebel, daughter of the Phœnician king. And Jezebel brought with her a great company of priests of Ashtaroath, four hundred of whom ate at her own table. And so the worship of Ashtaroath with Baal became a part of the life of Ahab's court. Everybody who wanted to stand

well at court must pay devotion at the shrine of Ashtaroth. Presently, as the fierce temper of the queen showed itself, the choice between religion and society became more sharp and imperative. All the nobility of Israel, all the princes and prelates, all the great lords and the fine ladies, had to choose between court and conscience, between the approbation of Jezebel and the approbation of Jehovah. That is what Ashtaroth meant. Ashtaroth was the goddess of irreligious society. And all her worshipers had preferred pleasure and social position to the obedience of God.

Baal and Ashtaroth were the deities of Ahab's Israel. God was forgotten. Then the drought came, and the brooks ran dry. And famine followed, and there was a sudden stop in all that irreligious business, and a sudden break in the gayeties of all that irreligious society. And men and women began to think. They began to pay attention to the voice of God.

This is one of the benedictions of disaster: that it sets us face to face with the realities of life. We come into an irresistible recognition of the fact that there is something more valuable than money, and more precious than pleasure. Day by day we are busy doing our day's work, occupied with the small interests which crowd our time, set upon transitory purposes, taken up with

matters of the moment. And these things seem the only realities there are. God is out of sight and out of mind. Heaven and hell are theological expressions. Prayer is of no practical value. But we can put our hand on the round face of the dollar. We can be absolutely sure of the existence of a dollar. That, anyhow, is real.

And then comes trouble. And what a change that makes! What a reversal of all our valuations! Can money help us? Can society console us? O Baal, hear us! But there is no voice, nor any that answers. Baal is silent; Ashtaroth is silent. And here is the drought and the famine, and the brook is dried up because there is no rain in the land. Then we begin to think. And we remember God. And we change the emphasis of our life, and put it in a better place. And the dry brook teaches the lesson which it taught in Ahab's day—the lesson of the supremacy of God, the lesson of the infinite seriousness of life.

But Elijah knew that lesson. There was no need to teach that to Elijah. Let the other brooks dry up; but this brook Cherith at Elijah's feet—surely God will keep that full of water. Morning and evening come the ravens, bringing breakfast and supper to the hungry prophet, and he drinks the water of the brook. God is taking care of Elijah. The hot sun glares out of the sky, but

the deep valley is in the shadow. The famine tightens its hold upon the starving people, but Elijah neither thirsts nor hungers. And he paces up and down in his solitary valley, safe and satisfied, and rejoices, like Jonah, to imagine the fearful execution of the sentence of the indignant God.

But by and by the heat begins to creep down into the pleasant valley; little by little the water in the brook grows less. The days pass; the anxious prophet watches; at last, "after awhile," the brook dries up. And the drought touches Elijah.

Now here is one of the hardest things to understand in the hard problem of pain. I mean this strange impartiality. If the brook had dried up in front of Ahab's palace, that would have been right. We could see plainly enough what that was for. But when the brook dries up at the feet of the only good man in the whole country, that is quite a different matter. "There was no rain in the land," and that affected Elijah's brook just as it affected Ahab's. Sometimes there is a pestilence in the land, and the saint suffers like the sinner. All the time there is trouble in the land, of one sort or another, and the trouble touches the good just as it touches the bad. There is no difference. And we wonder why.

No doubt but Elijah, standing on the bank of the dry brook, wondered why.

We can see why in Elijah's case. The dry brook taught Elijah the lesson of fellowship.

There he sat apart in his pleasant valley, and all the world about him was full of trouble. It is not likely that he greatly cared. He was a stern man, a preacher of the indignation of an offended God. It may even have given him a certain fierce joy to think of all that misery. These people had sinned, and now they were getting properly punished; and Elijah was glad of it. And he needed to be taught better than that. And so the dry brook brought him, first of all, out of his satisfied seclusion. He had to leave that pleasant valley.

Trouble comes and makes our old life impossible any longer. We have been abiding in some pleasant valley, and God summons us out of it. The brook dries up, and we cannot go on in the old way. Sometimes it seems like the end of all that is worth while in life. Probably it is but the beginning of a wider living. It is no longer well for us to stay in the pleasant valley. God has some work for us to do, some help for us to render in his service, and we need the closer fellowship with men which we could never have in the secluded valley. That is why the brook dries up.

Out goes Elijah into the suffering world.

Hungry and thirsty he takes his journey across the country. He knows now what starvation means. A great pity begins to take possession of his heart. He thinks now about that great famine in quite another way, and wants it ended. And presently he is standing on the top of Carmel, and looking up into the hot sky, and praying God for rain.

It is essential that whoever would be a helper of men must first have fellowship with men. He must go out among them and know them. He cannot stay apart in any pleasant seclusion, having no experience of the hunger and thirst which devour the life of man; he must himself bear our sicknesses and carry our sorrows. We must first love him before he can be of help to us. And we can love him only when he first loves us. Christ stands supreme in our affection because he came out among us, and touched our hands with his hands, and did not in any way hold himself aloof even from sinners. And because he was tempted, he became our helper in temptation. Because he suffered with us, he becomes our Saviour.

The brook dries up, and we begin to understand what other people suffer. And so we begin to be able to help them. There is that blessing in pain and trouble, anyhow, that it gives sympathy, and

fellowship, and understanding. It sends us out of the pleasant valley into the world where God needs us for his work.

The dry brook taught Ahab the existence of God; but it taught Elijah the existence of man.

THE BEGINNING OF THE MILLENNIUM.

“JUDGE not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven; give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.”

When nobody any longer judges nor condemns his neighbor, and when everybody gives and forgives, then we will be living in the beginning of the millennium. It needs no argument, in this world of busy tongues, to show the advantage of such a state as that. All that we want to know is how to bring that state of things about. Christ tells us that it is possible to drive all unkind speech out of the world, and to put generosity and forgiveness in the place of it. The millennium is possible. But how?

We look into the books that give us pictures of the twentieth century and offer to guide us into the promised land. And the land is fair

enough and attractive enough, and a good deal of an improvement upon the United States of America. But the way over to it is not so plain. We will somehow get there, the prophets tell us: there will be a social revolution, there will be a conquest of the classes by the masses, there will be this, that, and the other crisis, catastrophe, blooming out of the new life from the old; and then we will all love one another, and the brotherhood of man will be a blessed universal reality. The truth is that, while we all want the millennium badly enough, nobody is quite sure of the way to it. The blind are leading the blind, and the end of such leading is pretty sure to be a sudden fall into an unexpected ditch.

I have no faith in any dramatic beginning of the millennium. I do not believe that the curtain of cloud will roll up at the tinkle of any reformer's bell, and behold, a new heavens and a new earth. The millennium is coming, but it is coming in very homely, simple ways; not by any oratorical resolution passed in the parliament of man, not by any vaccination of the human heart with the bacillus of brotherly love, not by might of mobs nor strength of arms.

Christ tells us how the millennium will begin. But we listen to him as the Syrian nobleman

listened to the Hebrew prophet. The nobleman, you remember, wanted to be cured of his leprosy, and he came with his retinue of servants, a gorgeous procession, with trumpets and banners, he himself riding in the midst in his golden chariot; and they stopped before the plain house where the prophet lived, and the prophet sent out word that the best way to get rid of the leprosy was to go down and take a good bath in the river Jordan; and the nobleman was grievously offended. He had expected that Elisha would come out and bow down before him, and pray to heaven, and strike his hand over the place and make him whole. Instead of that, he was just to wash himself in a muddy little river. And then his servants came to him and said, "Master, if the prophet had commanded thee to do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much more, then, when he bids you wash and be clean!" And so the nobleman came to his right mind, and obeyed, and was cleansed.

How true that is to human nature! Here we are, praying that the kingdom of God may come, and laying plans to convert all men to brotherly love, and wondering what is just the best way to do that, and studying political economy to find out, and imagining some wonderful new legislation, or some fine new method of taxation, or

some sublime revolution, and not listening to what Christ says at all.

Christ says that if we want to put a stop to unkind and unjust judging, we must simply stop that sort of judging our own selves. If we would not have others condemn us, we must not condemn them. If we want to bring in a revival of the spirit of forgiveness, we must ourselves be forgiving. And if we desire a better distribution of the good things of life, and want other people to give us better measure, we must begin that our own selves; we must ourselves set the standard of good measure. That is, as we do, so will others do to us. If we do well, others will do well. The whole world will become Christian if we are Christians. The millennium begins at home.

That is very plain and slow and homely. It is not taken account of in "Looking Backward" or in "News from Nowhere," or in any of the other popular prophecies that I have read. But it is the simple truth about the matter. It is the narrow way, and the Christian way, and the divine way, and the only way, into the promised land. There can be no regeneration of society without first a regeneration of the individual. There can be no human brotherhood except among a company of brothers. And you cannot get brotherly love by passing laws.

Already there is beginning a reaction against socialism. The labor unions are making enemies. Plain-thinking and clear-headed men are doubting whether the millennium is any more likely to come along the path of the tyranny of labor than along the path of the tyranny of capital. It was found, a good while ago, when experiments were being tried in ecclesiastical government, that "my lords the brethren" were even harder masters than "my lords the bishops." And it is being found to-day, to the workingman's sorrow, that recent experiments in the regulation of labor are resulting in that same sort of discovery. The laborer has lost his liberty. How long or how short shall be his day, how much or how little shall be his wages, whether he shall work at all or not, is being absolutely decided for him as if he were a child. And if he attempts to assert his independence, and to follow his own honest will as a man should, his lords the brethren will make life miserable for him, they will hoot at him in the street and stone him.

It is not that socialism is at fault, for socialism is simply applied Christianity. It is an endeavor to set the conditions of human life upon a distinctly Christian basis. It is an attempt to bring in the millennium. I believe most thoroughly that when Christ preached the "kingdom of God" he

was thinking not for a moment of the Church as an ecclesiastical organization, but of the socialistic state, of the establishment of society on the sure foundations of brotherly love.

But I believe with equal emphasis that there is only one way to bring in the socialistic state, and that that is not the way of tyranny, but the way which Christ taught. You cannot whip men into brotherhood; you cannot stone men into fraternal love. Brotherhood, yes; all good men standing together for the best interests of all, yes; but manhood first. Personal liberty first. The ideal brotherhood is not a labor union of machines, but a labor union of independent men.

If socialism means tyranny, then let all lovers of liberty oppose it. If the union of labor means the stealing of the rights of man, then let all friends of humanity do their best to break it.

No: true socialism means honest and genuine and loving brotherhood, and has no use for brickbats. And the union of labor, if it is to go on—as God grant it may go on—must proceed along the lines which Christ lays down, must persuade and not compel, must be a willing union, with no hard words and no hard hands, encouraging the liberty of all men and paying no court to tyranny. “Give, and it shall be given unto you,” must be the formula of its faith and its hope.

And "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over" will be its sure reward.

The kingdom of God has no place in the geographies. The kingdom of God is in the hearts of men. You know how they used to ask Christ in the old days, over and over, when the kingdom of God should come. But he set no date. For the kingdom of God, the millennium, the reign of righteousness, begins whenever and wherever any man or woman stops uttering unkind judgments and uncalled-for condemnations, and begins with a new earnestness to give and to forgive. And the kingdom of God will fully come, and earth will be given another name and be christened heaven, on the very day when all the men and all the women who live upon it shall have learned that lesson of eternal love.

And so you see it depends, as I said, not upon princes, not upon parliaments, not upon saints, not upon socialists, but just upon our own individual selves when the millennium shall come. Not from without, but from within, is reformation to be looked for. Not by new laws, but by new love, is society to be uplifted, and converted, and set right. And you and I must make the beginning.

Don't wait. Don't look for leaders. Begin

yourself. Judge not, and see how soon you will stop hearing unkind comments. Condemn not, and notice what a new tolerance and charity will come into the speech of all who talk with you. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven, and your example will awaken, though you may not know it, a new sense of the possibility of forgiveness. Give and it shall be given unto you. Everybody you know will begin giving.

James Freeman Clarke describes in his fragment of autobiography a journey from Massachusetts to Kentucky in the days before the railroad. He noticed, he says, that the tone of a stage-coach party often depended upon the temper of a single individual. A cross, ill-natured, complaining fellow would make all the other passengers cross, ill-natured, and complaining. "Once," he says, "when going through the Cattaraugus woods, where the road was mostly deep mire or rough corduroy and there was every temptation to be cross and uncomfortable, one man so enlivened and entertained our party, and was so accommodating and good-natured that we seemed to be having a pleasant picnic, and the other inmates of the coach took the same tone. I therefore found it best for my own sake, as soon as we took our places in the coach for a long journey, to manifest an interest in my fellow-passengers

and their comfort; offering, for example, to change places with them if they preferred my seat to their own, and paying them such little attentions as are always agreeable. It happened almost always that the other passengers would follow this lead, and take pains to be civil and accommodating." Is not that a parable of human life? Widen out a stage-coach and you get a neighborhood. And set down one individual in that neighborhood who tries a good many times a day to do what Christ says, and you get a glimpse of the millennium. That is how the millennium begins.

THE HOLINESS OF HOLIDAYS.

“COME ye yourselves into a desert place, and rest awhile.”

That is, into a deserted place. When we hear the word “desert” we begin at once to think of sand: we think of the desert of Sahara, or of that waste tract in Colorado which is just now being so singularly changed into a lake. But the word here means a deserted place. There was no lack of grass in it; the trees grew there, the hills lifted their green heads into the sky; but nobody lived there. Christ wanted the disciples to have a holiday, and his idea of a holiday was not to get into a crowd, but to get out of it. He proposed that they should go into a place where they could be alone.

The disciples had just come back from a missionary journey. They had been going about among the village of Galilee, preaching the new gospel. And they had come again that they might give an account of their good work. They

gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and they told him all things whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught. All the discouragements, all the temptations, all the successes and the victories, they rehearsed to him. And when they came to the end of their enthusiastic story, Jesus said, Come now and rest; come ye yourselves into a desert place and rest awhile.

The disciples were as busy as a parson and a doctor put together. There were so many coming and going that they had no time, not even for their dinners. And Jesus saw that they were tired.

Our Lord was notably attentive to the needs of the body. When he saw people hungry he wanted to give them something to eat. When the wine gave out at the wedding he provided more. That, you remember, was the first of the miracles, and I need not tell you how it was followed by innumerable others, all with that same intention—to make life brighter and happier. He went about doing good. He was all the time making sick people well, and driving away pain, and giving smiles for tears. And these blessed deeds were not just for the sake of the soul. They were not meant only to persuade attention, to win faith, to get a congregation. They were not like the bell which they used to ring about

the streets in the old days to attract hearers to the sermon. Very often there was no sermon. The Master's heart was overflowing with divine compassion. He wanted everybody to be well and happy. He did not care so much for the soul that the body was of no consequence to him.

It is plain, and most significant, that the greater part of Christ's teaching related not to the next world, but to this world. He said that the whole duty of man is summed up in two commandments—that we love God, and that we love our brother also. And he spent the most of his time teaching the second of the two. Take the Sermon on the Mount: how little there is in it of theology, the science of God, and how much of sociology, the science of society; how entirely it is taken up with the divine task of making this life better, leaving the next life till we come to it. It is a sermon about conduct, about the art of living with others, about the social virtues, about brotherly love. And then consider the parables and the miracles; see where Christ put the emphasis of his blessed teaching. The purpose that he lived for was to make this planet a better place to live in. He came to save us from our sins—that is, to help us out of our vices, our uglinesses, and our tyrannies, and our meannesses, and all our unbrotherliness, and to make

us pleasanter people to live with now. You know the list he gave of examination questions for admission into heaven—not one of them containing even a mention of theology: have you fed the hungry? have you visited the sick? have you cared for the sinner? That shows what Christ considered to be the biggest and best part of Christianity. He founded the Christian Church that it might convert the kingdom of the devil into the principality of the Son of God. He meant that Christians should be known, not by their doctrines about theology, but by their ministrations in society. He said that if heaven is ever going to begin for man, here is the place and now is the time. “Behold, how these Christians love one another!” That is what Christ wanted everybody in the world to say.

Christ, I said, taught sociology rather than theology. That proportion is reversed, I am afraid, in some of the theological seminaries. The very name shows it. I have never heard of a sociological seminary. The ministers in the Christian Church are trained in divinity schools,—notice the name again,—not in humanity schools. They are taught a score of dead-and-buried heresies. They become familiar with a ghostly company of obsolete isms. They are made at home amidst the metaphysical hair-split-

tings of ancient Oriental synods. And then they come out into a world where the most urgent of all questions are those which concern the relations of living men in modern society. And they are about as well fitted to pronounce as they ought upon the ethics of these vital questions and to bring light into the darkness as the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus would be qualified to vote upon the tariff. There ought to be a chair of sociology in every institution where men are being trained to carry on Christ's work in the world. That would help to put the Christian emphasis where Christ put it. The endowment of such a chair would be one of the most helpful uses I can think of for a rich man's money.

Christianity means the bettering of common life. It has just as much to do with business as it has with religion, and six times as much to do with week-days as it has with Sunday. It is concerned with prayer-books, yes; but not any more than with pocket-books.

And yet, listen to this: "The complaint made by American workingmen against the churches is that they fail to influence conduct, that they fail to impress their fundamental principles upon those who give direction to the practical affairs of life in the counting-room, in legislative halls, and on the bench, although these men profess

Christianity. Laboring men do not feel that it is better for them to work for a Christian than for one who denies the obligations of Christianity—the outcome of experience has not taught them that such is the case; they do not believe that church membership on the part of their landlord insures just and considerate treatment for his tenants; they do not flock to the merchants who acknowledge Christ as their Master, in confidence that they will merely on that account receive of them honest goods for a fair price; they do not rejoice when they learn that a railway magnate, in whose employ thousands of their number stand, is regularly attending an orthodox church.” You know better than I whether that is true or not. And you know just as well as I what Christ would say to such a Christianity as that.

Now the application which I want to make to-day of this intimate bearing of genuine Christianity upon common life has to do with the holiness of holidays. Christ took the tired disciples out into the country for a holiday. Amidst all the great matters which urged themselves upon the attention of him who had come to save a world, Christ found time and interest to care for the bodily needs of his followers. He felt that the holiness of holidays was a part of his religion.

There was nothing especially new in that. God

himself, setting down ten rules for the well-being of the race, set down among them one rule about a holiday. He occupied a tenth part of the revelation and enforcement of the moral law with this provision for man's rest. "And rest awhile,"—that is one of the commandments. You know that the fourth commandment has in it nothing about church-going, nothing about what we commonly call religion. Keep a holy day, it says, but the adjective means separate, reserved,—set apart a day: that is the meaning of it. Every week, set apart one day for rest. You know how in the version of the commandment given in Deuteronomy that idea of rest is repeated and emphasized. The Hebrews are reminded of those old weary days of slavery. "You know what it is to be tired. Now you are your own masters and I want you to rest. One day every week, stop work. And give a holiday also to all the men, and all the women, and all the cattle that labor for you." Out of every seven days, one day for rest.

Now that sets the minimum of the righteous man's rest. That counts off the number of days in a Christian working-week. And I want to say, as Christian minister, that every employer of labor who works his men more than six days in a week breaks the commandment of Almighty God. I

am well aware that there are certain industries that must go on, Sunday or no Sunday. I do not believe that such a thing is possible, nor even desirable, as a total stopping of Sunday work. The gripman and the milkman and the minister cannot well get rest on Sunday. Well, then, on some other day than Sunday. That is the best day; but six from seven will leave one all the same, though the one be Saturday or Tuesday. God who gave the commandments claims for his tired children one day out of the seven.

The Sabbath was made for man. That is what the Master said. Out of every week some Sabbath day God made for man. The Sabbath was made for the men in your mill. The Sabbath was made for the men in your store. The Sabbath was made for the women in your kitchen. Remember that there are six days only in a Christian working-week. If you require seven, one is stolen. Surely there can be such an arrangement of work in every righteous man's business that every man in his employ can get off one day every week. Fifty-two rest days belong, by simple right, to every child of God. And every man who carries his Christianity out of church with him will make it a matter of conscience that the number be complete. "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day: Six days shalt thou labor

and do all that thou hast to do, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God."

Thus much, however, is of obligation. The Christian employer of labor, it seems to me, will do this and more than this; because the principle on which the Christian lives is that he shall love his neighbor as himself. And everybody who loves his neighbor as himself wants his neighbor not only to have some time for rest, but to have some time for the pleasures of life. People must have rest or else they can't do your work for you. It is in your own interest to have them stop work one day in seven; they will do more work the other six. But the Christian employer is not occupied entirely in getting all the work he can out of his men. For these men are not machines, nor "hands" only; they are men and brothers. And the genuine Christian loves his brother. He wants to better his brother. He wants to make his brother's life happier. There is no Christian man named Cain.

I go on, accordingly, to certain applications of the Christian principle of the holiness of holidays which would bring still more leisure into human life than is provided for by one whole Sunday every week.

I am not prepared to say much about the number of hours in a working-day. I suppose that

the time will come when it will be possible to make eight hours the standard. And it seems to me that everybody ought to want that time to come, because that will mean that the working-man has a chance to do something besides work. After all, we were not made to spend our lives in a treadmill. The spirit of the Christian religion puts it into the heart of every Christian employer to give his men just as much time for their own use as can be given. Money is a great thing, but a Christian does not care half so much for money as he does for men. I must say that seventeen hours for a working-day is only another description of mere slavery. You might as well propose to buy a man, body and soul. I do not understand how any Christian can be willing, for any amount of gain, to accept such an utter sacrifice of his brother's life.

I am glad to see an extension of interest in the Saturday half-holiday. It has got into the government offices and into the wholesale houses and into the banks, and I hope that there will be no stopping till it touches every mill and every shop in the whole country. They have won this reform in England. Men work fifty-four hours in the week in that enterprising country. And no poverty appears to threaten industry over there. The whole nation is better for that extra leisure.

Somehow the stores seem to keep open on this side of the ocean. But we can remedy that, if we will. It is certain that there can be no selling if there is no buying. The only reason for keeping tired clerks away from the green parks is that they may wait on customers. The shops will close quick enough if the shop-keepers are making no money. And so the people have the matter in their own hands. If we believe as Christ did in caring for the bodies of men, if we want everybody who needs a rest to get at least that much of a rest, you know that we can make a beginning by keeping a Saturday half-holiday ourselves. Don't buy anything on Saturday afternoon.

A good many reformers need nothing but a little thoughtfulness—that is, a little more applied Christianity. The grocery stores, I understand, are kept open very late on Saturday for the accommodation of thoughtless people, so that the grocers' clerks get not so much as a Saturday evening holiday. And then they miss church on Sunday.

Finally, I want to say something about the Christian duty of taking a vicarious vacation. This is now the season when a good many fortunate people are beginning, in at least one respect, to imitate the twelve apostles: they are

going out into the country to "rest awhile." This is the time to think about vacation. Now, why not take a vicarious vacation? By that I do not mean, Why not let somebody take your vacation for you? but Why not get somebody else to share your vacation with you? Because you are going, make it possible for some one else to go.

For it happens sometimes—yes, a great deal of the time!—that those who need the country most are the least able to get a glimpse of it. It is not out of the courts and alleys, not out of the fourth stories of the tenement-houses, that the summer tourists come. But that is where the people live who need the sight of the hills and the smell of the sea. And a vicarious vacation will mean a part of your vacation shared with them. Don't go off and forget the weary mothers and the sick babies who cannot go. Don't be content to take a vacation without helping also to give a vacation.

There might easily be more of this vicarious vacation, of this fraternal, this Christian holiday, than there is. Charitable societies in most cities arrange every summer to provide holidays for the children of the poor. If no other way of sharing your vacation seems better to you, this is a good way: send five dollars to this excellent society to help in this Christian work.

Come ye yourselves apart into some country place and rest awhile, Christ said. Let us do more than listen ; let us repeat that gracious and fraternal invitation.

MONEY FOR MEN.

"I WILL make a man more precious than fine gold, even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir."

That is written in the pages of Isaiah's book, but Isaiah never said it. The scholars who translated that chapter in the year 1611 thought that that was what Isaiah said. But the scholars who translated it over again in the year 1884 say that what Isaiah really wrote was this: "I will make man more rare than fine gold."

The preacher was promising a day of trouble for great Babylon. "Behold," he cried, "the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate." And then he came to the very abyss and extremity of their desolation. Bad enough to have the land shorn of its harvests, and all the standing grain trampled under the feet of war-horses; bad enough to have the consuming fire lay hold upon its houses; bad enough to have pride turned into

shame, and wealth into poverty, and power into captivity. All that was bad enough. But thus far hope was left, for men were left. Leave us men and we may live. Leave us men and you may do your worst: the day will pass, and to-morrow we will repair the damage, and begin over again, and get our revenge upon you yet. But there shall be no men. The widows and the fatherless children shall search about the ruined streets, and a man shall be as rare a sight as a purse of gold. "I will make a man more precious than fine gold, even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir." That was what Isaiah said.

"I will make a man more precious than fine gold." I will so bring it about that a man shall be of more value than a bar of gold. I will make men love their brother-men more than they love their money. Isaiah never said that; but God said it, and says it still. This is a sentence out of the Word of God. Isaiah said a great many things in his day, and is dead. But God is not dead. And God says this to-day. In the Bible or out of the Bible, this is the voice of God. This word is true with all the truth of God Almighty.

On one side a man, on the other side a bar of gold. On one side a man, on the other side a

herd of swine. That, you remember, was at Gaddara, beyond the Lake of Galilee. Christ had healed a poor man there who had a whole legion of devils in possession of him, and somehow that healing had involved the loss of a large herd of swine. Down they had rushed over a steep place into the sea, and that was the end of the swine,—but it was the beginning of the man. And then the owners came. And when they came they altogether overlooked the man. They paid no heed to this their brother clothed and in his proper mind, made all over new. Their eyes were a-search for swine. They had lost two thousand head of swine! And they requested Jesus to depart out of their coasts as speedily as possible.

I will make a man more precious than a herd of swine, or than a purse of gold, or than the golden wedge of Ophir. There is no question as to Christ's comparative valuation of a man and money. Men were not for money, in his estimation, but money for men.

There was an interesting discussion going on some time ago as to the best uses for money. Mr. Carnegie began it; Mr. Gladstone and Cardinal Manning and Cardinal Gibbons contributed to it; Mr. Phelps and Bishop Potter were the last speakers. How to persuade rich men to spend money

in the right way and what precisely is the right way of spending money were the main points under consideration.

Do you not see how the text touches the heart of the whole matter? saying to the rich man, Your brother is more precious than your bank-account. Is it not plain that, if a man once gets that well into his heart, there need be no further fear about that man? Henceforth his supreme interest is in the men about him. Perhaps he has a great army of them in his mill, or a regiment of them in his store, or a company of them in his office. He wants to help those men. He will spend his money—there is no need to persuade a man to spend his money for that which interests him—and he will spend his money well. A man who is interested is going to advance his interests. You may trust him for that. This man cannot help spending his money. Spend it? Why, he will spend it just as he eats his dinner. The purpose of a dinner is to be eaten, and the purpose of money is to be spent. He will spend his money, and spend it in the right way.

The text sets the emphasis, not on money, but on men. And that is Christianity. That is what the Master taught.

Remember how there came to him that rich young man, that good young man. Good? he was

an example for church-members. All the commandments had he kept from his youth up. An estimable young man, always at church, always well-conducted. What lacked he yet? At once Christ tested him. What did he think of money and of men? On the one side money, on the other side men. Come, now, which do you care for most? in which are you really interested most? Take your money and go spend it in helping men. But you know that the young man did not do that. He made the great refusal. He went home and added up his bank-account. His fine gold was more precious than a man.

What we all need, whether we have great possessions or small possessions, is to be interested in men. The part of a Christian man or a Christian woman is to set about making somebody's life better. I believe that preaching does some good. Somebody has compared it to dashing a lot of water over a collection of narrow-necked vessels: a drop or two gets in. But I know that the most good is done when the preacher goes down out of the pulpit, and talks quietly and privately and personally to one man or one woman. I believe, too, that some good is done by the general distribution of charity, by putting money into church alms basins, and writing figures in subscription lists. But I know that the best good is got at

when one helps one; when a man goes to his neighbor and gets acquainted with him, and becomes his personal friend, and sympathizes with him, and uplifts him. You won't have to go very far to find somebody who is worse off than you are. Take that somebody up. Interest yourself in that unhappy life. Perhaps it will take money; perhaps it will take time; perhaps it will take yourself. Give yourself, anyhow, and as much else as you need to. But, above all, be generously interested. What men and women want is honest interest, real, human, brotherly and sisterly interest. They look into your eyes as you take their hand, and they read there whether to you a man is more precious than fine gold or not.

There is no need to bring forward proof to convince people that the man who has the strongest hand to-day to reach out and pull up those who are down is the man who owns a million dollars. There is no end to what that man can do. At the same time it is evident to everybody, upon the plain statement of the fact, that the man who has actually done the most for men, been the supreme benefactor, and the pre-eminent reformer, and the most availing lifter of all history, was really one of the poorest men that ever lived, and had not where to lay his head. He came out of

a carpenter's shop, and had not an extra dollar in his pocket all his life long. You do not need to be rich to be a helper. You only need to be interested with all your heart. But if you do have money, oh, what miracles you can do with it!

One of the most helpful people of my acquaintance lives in a back street, in an unpleasant neighborhood, in a small house. Everybody in that neighborhood knows her, and she knows them and their children. They go to her with their troubles and she gives them her sympathy. As for money, she would give that too if she had any to give. She gives herself. The whole street is better because she lives on it. But if she had the means which some have, what would she do, I wonder? Would she fall before the temptation of a comfortable life? Would she get, perhaps, to thinking that because she had plenty of butter on her bread so had everybody else? and because she was contented, all the mutterings of discontented people were but needless grumblings? Anyhow, it is true that the kindest, most thoughtful, most helpful people, quickest to bear the hardest inconveniences for a neighbor, readiest to lift up those that are down, are the poor.

It is not your money that we want so much as your interest. We want your own personal, hand-to-hand and heart-to-heart endeavor. Do you not

remember in the old story how Elisha sent his servant with his staff to bring back life to the dead, and the servant and the staff were no good at all? the dead stayed dead. And then he came himself, and the still heart began to beat. We want you to come yourself. Don't send your servant! Don't send anything! Come yourself!

"Who gave himself." That is the secret of the power of Jesus Christ over the hearts of men to-day. He went about taking men by the hand and lifting them up. Jesus Christ was more interested in men than he was in anything else on earth or in heaven. He cared not for reputation, cared not for the comforts of a sheltered life, cared not for money, cared not for himself, but he did care for men. And he loved us and gave himself for us.

The best use that can be made of money is to use it for the uplifting of men. If extravagant dinners will uplift men, give extravagant dinners. If elaborate dresses will really help anybody, order elaborate dresses. Mr. Phelps says that rich men are helping poor men when they give them employment manufacturing luxuries. We must be somewhat suspicious, however, of this pleasant way of helping others by helping ourselves. But money is for men: that is the whole sermon in a sentence. Money is for men: not men for money.

Any use of money which makes better men is a good use. The Christian capitalist is not so much interested in getting all he can out of his men as he is in getting all he can into them. Fine gold is precious because we can make use of it in the upbuilding of a man.

WHAT A BLIND MAN SAW.

“AND he looked up and said, I see men ; for I behold them as trees, walking.” That is what a blind man saw.

The man was blind—like the rest of us. We may have better eyes than he had ; but we do not see with our eyes. Everybody knows that. We see with our minds. The mind looks out through the lens of the eye as through a glass, and so sees. Of course we need eyes. But how much we see with our eyes depends upon the seeing mind. Every summer crowds of people go over to see Europe, but what they see is limited by what they know. The most expert oculist cannot make a dull mind see. There was a wise man in the old time who put out both his eyes, and even then saw more than everybody else in all Greece. It is the mind that sees.

And when we come to think of sight as mind-seeing, we cannot escape the confession of blindness. For clear seeing means clear thinking.

And who will claim the prize for that? We are all brothers of the blind man.

This blind man, who at first saw nothing but a universal blackness, presently got his eyes half open. And Christ said, "Do you see anything?" And the man answered, "I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking."

He saw men, and he was quite sure that they were men because he saw them walking about like trees! Whether the men looked to him like trees, or the trees seemed to him to be walking about like men, it would be hard to say. But it is evident what a hazy, blundering vision he had.

We can see better than that. We can tell a man from a tree. Anyhow, we think we can. But can we? Is that sure?

Is it not true, now, that a man is more of a man if he owns a tree? Suppose he owns a hundred trees, and a great green acre of smooth lawn in the shadow of them; suppose that he has got a lot of big trees together, and built himself a fine house out of them, is he not more of a man on that account? And so, is not a tree a part of a man? Does it not go to the making of manhood? Ought we not to regard him as the first among men who possesses the most trees?

You will not say that, nor will I. We know better than that. We know very well that not

what a man has, but what he is, makes him more of a man or less of a man, and settles his real station in the company of men. We know that character means manhood, and that the best man is the best man, and that trees have nothing to do with it. We do not mistake trees for men. But can we say as much for all our neighbors? Is that the common way of estimating men?

Look closely at this blind man of Bethsaida, and see if you do not know him. Is not his name Society?

What this blind man needs is that Christ shall touch him, and set his eyes wide open, so that he may know a man when he looks at him. Aristocracy is an abiding characteristic of human life. It has always existed; it exists everywhere; and it will continue on into the world to come. For the aristocrats are simply the best. That is what the word means. And there will always be the best. There will never arrive a day when we shall all be perfectly equal saints and heroes. But best in what? The ideal aristocracy—who shall belong to it? Sometimes it has been made up of the men with the stoutest muscles; sometimes of the descendants of the oldest settlers; sometimes of people with the fullest pocket-books. But Christ leaves no doubt as to the ideal aristocracy. Society, looking

about with open eyes and clear vision to choose its best, will base its choice not upon any of these conditions. Christ cared not for strength, except for strength of character. It mattered not to him though a man's great-grandfather were the patriarch Abraham. And he loved the poor man just as much as he loved the rich man. Look at the men whom Christ chose as the actual aristocracy in his own ideal commonwealth. The twelve apostles were selected not even for their wisdom, but simply for their devotion to their Master. They were men who gladly followed Christ. They were the friends of Christ.

The Bible makes short work of conventional aristocracies. The proudest prince gets no praise in that impartial and just history if he were a man who followed not the will of God. The standard of approbation in the Bible is the rule of righteousness. And when Society looks out of dim eyes no longer, but sees with clear vision, touched by the healing hand of Christ, then he will have praise and welcome who brings manhood with him; Christian manhood and Christian womanhood will stand for more than titled birth or bank account. There will no longer be any doubt as to the identity of a man.

One of the most important advantages of sight is that it gives a knowledge of difference. It

makes it possible for us to distinguish between a man and a tree. And this knowledge of difference is one of the most useful pieces of information that anybody can have. Because it tells us what is valuable and what is not. We know what things are really worth. And that is the beginning of all sorts of success.

A large part of the battle of life has been fought and gained when one has learned the difference between a man and a tree. For that is the difference between the great and the small, between mind and matter, between the eternal and the transitory, between earth and heaven. Success begins with a recognition of the values of things. It is conditioned upon a sense of proportion. Nobody ever made a fortune who expended any considerable amount of "five-dollar time" upon "fifty-cent jobs." Nobody ever succeeded who habitually mistook small things for great, or great things for small.

Look again at this blundering blind man. Is not his name the Church?

This, anyhow, is exactly what the Church is doing,—making a mistaken valuation, reading life with a wrong emphasis, setting small things in the place of great things. Some people think that the adoption of colored book-marks is a sign of the advance of true religion. A vested choir

is a regiment enlisted against the armies of the devil. The growth of ritual is a growth of righteousness. Other people think that these things are earthly, sensual, and of the pit. The mischief is in caring about these things at all. What the Church wants is men. All else is utterly subordinate. To teach the truth of God, and to get people where they can take the hand of Christ,—this is what the Church exists to do. Christ looks straight into the eyes of men. What does he care about the color of the leaves in the tree over his head? It is only the blind man who mixes men up with trees, and cannot tell which is which. The whole question of ritual, the whole discussion as to the cut and color of the parson's clothes, is nothing but a blind man's blunder.

There are few hindrances which offer worse obstruction to the progress of Christianity than the dissensions of Christians. And if you will think what these dissensions are about, you will see that they are about very small things indeed. Some people say that the rest of us are not good Christians because we sing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," instead of singing the psalms only, in Francis Rouse's version. Some people say that the rest of us are not Christians at all, and have never been baptized, because we have not been baptized according to a certain peculiar

ritual. Now it is a particular musical instrument which makes discord in the Christian congregation. Again, it is the necessity of inserting a certain word in the constitution of the United States. Shall the Christian man belong to a secret society? Shall the Christian man cast his Christian vote? After what pattern shall the ideal Christian Church be organized and governed? In our way, say the Anglicans; in our way, say the Romanists; in our way, say the Presbyterians; in our way, say the Baptists. Down in the southern counties of this State the number of buttons which a man shall wear on his coat is a matter of religion. Over in Russia, the number of fingers which the priest shall hold up when he pronounces the benediction is a matter of religion.

Mint, anise, and cummin! These are the things about which we cannot agree. We are at one in the essentials. We can say the Apostles' Creed together. But we fight each other when we ought to be fighting the enemy, because our different regiments wear different regimentals. Blind! blind! The Christian Church is a mighty giant. There is no end to its strength and its power, and no limit to the possibilities of its victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil. But the giant is blind, and cannot tell the difference between a

man and a tree, between the little and the big. And the giant is breaking twigs when he ought to be uplifting nations.

Christ healed a great many people in the years of his blessed ministry, but the writers of the gospels seem especially fond of telling us how he opened the eyes of the blind. For that is one of the sacramental miracles. Beneath the outward gesture and deed lies the spiritual meaning. We are all more or less blind. We are all feeling our way about in the haze, not seeing anything clearly, and often making blunders, taking men for trees. And Christ came to be the life of the world. He came to open our blind eyes, and to show us what things are,—to teach us the eternal difference between men and trees.

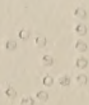
It is all very well to talk about the shortcomings of society and the faults of the Church, but we must remember that there is no such thing as abstract society, nor an abstract Church. These names mean us. Society means all of us considered socially. The Church means all of us considered ecclesiastically. Every time we are counted in. Society is blind, and the Church is blind, because you and I do not see as clearly as we might.

Look once more at this mistaken blind man. Is there not a certain familiarity in the features

of his face? Where have we looked into his blind eyes before? Ah! in our own mirror.

I know a great many people, and could set down their names and residences on a sheet of paper, and would only hesitate about the stopping place, who are as blind as that blind man was at Bethsaida. They are taking the small things in life to be the great things. They are very busy, day after day, in caring for what concerns their bodily comfort; they are neglecting their souls. At least, I infer that they are neglecting their souls. I would not say that church-going is an essential duty of Christian life. There is scarcely anything about it in the Christian Scriptures. But church-going is a pretty sure test of the Christian life. I have never known anybody about whose real Christianity I was certain who did not want to go to church. And when I see people busy and interested on Saturday, and busy and interested on Monday, and invisible and asleep on Sunday, I take it that that means something. And I know not what it means unless it is that these Sunday sleepers are forgetting that they have any soul.

My friends, if there are any of you within reach of these words,—honestly now, what are you doing for your souls? I know pretty well what you are doing for your minds, and what you are



doing for your business, and what you are doing for your pleasure. But you have a soul; you know that. And your soul is the most valuable possession that you have; is it not? This alone, of all that makes up your life, will determine your eternal future. And your soul needs care; does it not? Your body does, your business does, your mind does. The soul must grow, left to itself, like a tree. If you do not care for your soul, your soul will simply go on in the way of all things that are uncared for: it will die. And you will lose your soul.

There is a great difference between a man and a tree, and the largest part of the difference is in the fact that a man has a soul, while a tree has only trunk and branches. But there are always people blind enough to miss that. Somehow, it takes clear sight on the part of all of us to see that distinctly, and really to get it into our understanding. To set the emphasis on great things rather than on small things, to value the spiritual side of life at its right valuation, to keep the kingdom of God and his righteousness first and foremost every day we live, is the order of things with all people who know a man from a tree.

THE BRETHREN AND THE BROTHERHOOD.

THERE is a great difference between loving the brethren and loving the brotherhood. St. Peter, writing his first epistle, commends his Christian disciples in the first chapter because they love the brethren; in the second chapter he exhorts them to love the brotherhood. The brotherhood is the society of the brethren. The brotherhood is the Church.

One of the notable contrasts between the apostles Peter and Paul, and their successors, the popes, the prelates, and the presbyters, is their attitude toward the Church. The New Testament takes but little account of institutions. So indefinite is the New-Testament record of the discipline, the worship, and the government of the apostolic company of Christians that the Romanist, the Episcopalian, the Presbyterian, the Baptist can each say, "My way is the old way"; and each one can support his claim by excellent argu-

ments out of the same Scriptures. The truth is that nobody knows what the old way was. It is as lost as the old table and the old chairs in the upper room in which the Church began. Just how St. Paul set things in order at Corinth, no man can say. Probably St. Paul was guided on that occasion, and on most other occasions, by the principle of opportunism. He did that which the opportunity demanded. He was a great deal more concerned with getting the truths of the Christian religion into the hearts and lives of men than he was with any particular way of doing it. Any way to help men! Any way to save the souls of men! St. Paul cared more for the brethren than he did for the brotherhood.

On the other hand, there were some people in Jerusalem, as there have been a great many people in a great many places since, who seemed to think that men ought to be helped only in the one old way. Whoever would be saved must keep the law of Moses. Really, I suppose, they believed that nothing else would effectually help men. They laid such emphasis, however, on the old way that the supreme purpose of religion seemed to be not so much to make people better as to make them better by a particular process. Nobody had any business to be good in any other way. To bring in any new method was to en-

danger the whole system of religion. These people wanted to furnish the chancels of all the Christian churches with a table and a set of chairs made exactly like those which had stood at Pentecost on the floor of the upper room. They were against any man who suggested that, although that furniture answered excellently for Jerusalem, something else might do better for Alexandria or Rome. These people insisted that all "fishers of men" ought to use the same sort of bait and tackle that was used in the year one. Paul must fish at Athens just as Peter fished at Capernaum. The methods of the Lake of Galilee must be the methods of the Mediterranean. This way of looking at things set the emphasis upon the old precedents, attributed great importance to the established customs of the Christian society, elevated the brotherhood over the brethren.

These two ideas about religion have contended from the beginning.

You remember how the apostles found a man one day who was doing their work, and doing it more successfully than they were, but not according to their method. This man followed not with them. He loved the brethren, he loved every brother in the street. He wanted to help all who needed help, and he did help them in the name of Jesus. But for some reason he seems not to have

loved the brotherhood. He had no connection with the brotherhood. And the brotherhood did not like that. They forbade the man. They said that all that good work of casting out devils in the Master's name belonged to them. That was the brotherhood's business. They put a stop to that beneficent ministry. They were quite willing to let the brethren go on being vexed with devils, for the sake of the brotherhood.

It was about this matter that dissension arose in the days of the apostles between the Jewish and the Gentile converts. The Jews were not willing to relax the regulations of the religious society to meet the new conditions. Instead of going out with hands extended to welcome every Gentile brother who desired to take Christ for his teacher they stayed back, reflecting that such an invitation would be inconsistent with the customs of the brotherhood. And when Paul and Peter received these brethren, and brought them by a new way into the brotherhood, and men began to become Christians without ever being Jews at all, these conservative people were indignant. Peter lost the presidency of the Church at Jerusalem; Paul was complained about, called a heretic, hindered in his work, and persecuted. This was the first Christian controversy. It was the occasion of the calling of the first Christian council. That was

what they talked about there at Jerusalem: should their first care be about the brotherhood, that is, about the keeping of the old customs? or should their first care be about the brethren, that is, about the saving of the souls of all men in any way?

The question was decided at Jerusalem in favor of the brethren. The mind of the apostolic Church, as then expressed, was for setting the salvation of the individual above the preservation of any ancient custom. It was settled that the brotherhood existed for the brethren, not the brethren for the brotherhood. Nevertheless the thought of the Church for centuries ran in the other channel. The great work was the building of an institution, the strengthening and elaborating of an ecclesiastical organization. To erect stupendous buildings, to maintain a splendid ceremonial, to gain money, and to get power, were the undertakings which largely occupied the mediæval churchmen. Then came the Reformation. The Reformation was that old Jerusalem council over again. The question once more came up for settlement—which is the more important, the soul or the Church, the brethren or the brotherhood? The supreme purpose of the Reformation was to readjust the broken balance. They took away the emphasis from the federal

idea in religion, and set it on the individual idea. They taught that the soul of one man is worth more than all the ecclesiastical organization in the world. Perish the brotherhood if it hinder the brethren !

The Reformation, however, was not by any means an unqualified success. That, indeed, could hardly be expected. The Reformation was a reaction, and a reaction is a fall from one extreme to another. It is an endeavor to get a more accurate measure by taking all the weights out of one side of the scale and putting them on the other. The immediate result of the Reformation was anarchy. The brethren were now in the ascendant; the old brotherhood was abandoned; every brother did what was right in his own eyes. The world was filled with confusion. A hundred strange doctrines followed the unguided readings of untrained theologians in the pages of the Bible, and a hundred fanatical sects arose to represent them. Every man who even fancied that he had discovered a new truth got his friends and his neighbors together, and formed as many of them as he could persuade to follow him into a new "Church."

Along with this went, in some places, a forsaking of the ten commandments, and in other places a rejection of the Christian creed. Men

proposed to have no authority over them whatever. The standard of faith, the standard of morals, was to be new constructed by every individual out of the Bible. All the old traditions, the old ways, the old interpretations were to go for nothing. The Christian religion had been asleep or dead for sixteen hundred years. And now every man was an apostle. The old despotism was followed by the dismemberment of Christendom: the old superstition was followed by the new skepticism. And these evils continue to the present day.

Thus the Christian world was divided, and is divided still, into two opposing camps, protestant and catholic, each of them representing one of these contending ideas of religion. The underlying principle of protestantism is the exaltation of the brethren above the brotherhood; the underlying principle of catholicism is the exaltation of the brotherhood above the brethren.

Both are right, and wrong. Each needs the other. The love of the brotherhood divorced from the love of the brethren will always lead to superstition, to an undue reverence for form and custom, to some sort of tyranny. The love of the brethren separated from the love of the brotherhood will always minister to foolish divisions, to confusion of faith, to ecclesiastical

anarchy. Catholicism is not the right religion; protestantism is not the right religion. We ought to be catholic protestants and protestant catholics. We ought never to be satisfied until we are just as protestant and just as catholic as St. Peter and St. Paul. St. Peter, who said, "Love the brotherhood," said also, "Love as brethren." St. Paul, whose characteristic doctrine of justification by faith is the great doctrine in the protestant creed, had more to say than any other New-Testament writer about the Church.

We ought to love the brethren. Religion is for men. The mission of the Church is to help everybody who needs help. There is constant need of humanizing the work of the Church, that is, of emphasizing the supreme purpose for which the Church exists,—to make the world better. The test of any method, of any custom in the Church, is not its age, but its actual usefulness. That ministry, for example, is a valid ministry which succeeds in saving souls. That organization is the best which can show the best results. In the Church, as everywhere else, the proof of the tree is in the fruit. We ought to welcome every innovation, every new idea, in proportion to its attractive influence. The Church is meant to bring the life of Jesus Christ to the knowledge of every man in the world. The Church is set to

teach the great truths that he taught, and to get all people to believe them. Every endeavor to make that life more real and that truth more true to men has a right place in the Church. The Church ought to be big enough to take in all the brethren. There ought to be no need for anybody who loves the Lord Jesus Christ and wants to lead others into the light of that love, to go out of the Church to do it. Somehow, in the great reunited Church of the future, every sort of worship, every variety of ecclesiastical organization, every kind of method, every kind of man, will have a place. There will be room in it for the mistaken people. There will be room in it for the men of one idea. There will be room in it for all the brethren, and for all who love the brethren. The only ones who will have to stay out will be those who are not good enough Christians to tolerate differences. In the Church of the future, in which men will care more for souls than they will for systems, and in which the love and service of the Lord Jesus Christ will be the beginning and the middle and the end of religion, there will be a great deal of affirmation, but a great scarcity of negation. People will be content to set forth what they actually believe, without pronouncing condemnation on those who believe other than that. There will be no effort to force

faith. There will be such thorough confidence in the divinity of truth that truth will be left to prevail in its own way and in its own time, without the assistance of intolerance.

On the other hand, while we ought to love the brethren, we ought also to love the brotherhood. It is Christ himself who directs us to hear the Church. The customs of the ancient society, the ways of the Church, ought not to be readily laid aside. The probability is that the brotherhood is wiser than any of the brethren. The established order is the growth of long experience. It is the result of dealing for centuries with human nature. These ways have been found helpful. They have been tried and proved. The chances are that they are the best ways that can be discovered. Welcome, indeed, all new ways, if they are better ways. Let us not be so committed to a system as to deny all possibility of betterment. To get a good work done is what we want, not to get it done in any particular way, even the most venerable. Nevertheless, until the new has shown its superiority, the old is better.

We ought to be loyal to the Church. We ought, as St. Peter says, to love the Church. The customs of the Church ought to be as dear to us as the customs of the family. We ought to try to learn all that we can about the Church, its history,

its interpretations of doctrine, its ways of helping people, its place in Christendom. I am sorry for anybody who belongs to a sect, whose membership is in a little, narrow, exclusive religious society which was established for the emphasizing of some one fragment of Christian doctrine, or for the sake of protesting against some old departure from the truth. I am sorry for anybody who cannot be enthusiastic about his Church, who does not honestly believe that it is the very Church itself, that Christ was the actual founder of it, and the apostles the first ministers; and that there is room in it for the whole circumference of Christian truth, and that all Christians of all names can find in it all that is best in each of their denominational positions, and a great deal more. Something is the matter, either with the Church or with the Christian, when the Christian does not love the Church.

THE SIMPLICITY OF RELIGION.

It is as clear and simple as the universal sunlight. In spite of all the creeds and all the catechisms, in spite of all the metaphysical theology, in spite of all the criticism and all the controversy, whatever is essential in religion is open to the understanding of a little child. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." That is what it all comes back to. Differences enough, diversities enough, but one and the same Holy Spirit, divine Saviour, heavenly Father, behind them all.

The subject is the Simplicity of Religion.

Religion, above all things, ought to be simple, because it is meant for so many simple people. It is a message for everybody, and must needs be capable of translation into everybody's language. And "everybody" is a wide word. It cannot

possibly be made to mean only the professors in the theological seminaries.

Religion is a universal need of man. It means instruction in perplexity, strength in temptation, comfort in grief; it is an answer to the universal questions—What am I? And what am I here for? And whither am I going? We all want to know that—all of us—not the philosophers alone. The great fact of sin and the great fact of pain get into every life. People who cannot read nor write walk along the ways of temptation, and look into the black depths of open graves, and so have need of the guidance and consolation of religion.

It would be hard to have to think that the good tidings of the Christian gospel should have been put into such large words and such long sentences that only the educated could make them out, and get the blessing of them. Somehow, when the angels taught religion out of the Bethlehem sky, the simple shepherds understood them. The Christmas sermon needed no interpretation at the hands of Pharisees and scribes.

When the great spiritual Master taught religion he did not teach it in Solomon's Porch to a select company of Jerusalem's wisest philosophers. He taught wherever he could get a hearing, out under the open sky, and in the streets of cities, and in the common houses of common people. And the

common people heard him gladly. He taught religion so that peasants and fishermen could understand it.

And yet there seem to be a great many hard things in religion. There are knots in it that cannot be untied except by doctors of divinity, and not always very successfully by them. Sometimes it seems like a hopelessly inextricable tangle. Sometimes it seems like a confusion of contradicting voices, some crying this and some that. There are so many "differences of administration," so many "diversities of operations," so many sects and parties, so many arguments and doctrines, that plain people fall into perplexity. To one who reads the titles of the books in theological libraries, religion seems a very complicated matter.

Part of this difficulty and difference in religion is due to theology; part of it is due to temperament.

Theology is the scientific statement of religion. It is an endeavor to get together all ascertainable religious truth, to classify it, to give it accurate definition, to draw out of it all available inferences. And that means difficulty always. All science is difficult, runs speedily into hard names and higher mathematics, and rises into the regions of unanswerable questions.

And yet we manage to get a good deal of satisfaction out of life though we may be utterly ignorant of quadratic equations. We can appreciate the pleasant flowers without knowing very much about botany. The sun will warm us and give us light to see by though we cannot tell how far distant it is from the surface of this planet, though we know not whether it be a solid or a gas. We can enjoy our dinners without an acquaintance with the intricate processes of digestion. We can see out of our eyes without knowing the first law of optics. Natural gas serves a great many people who could not write its chemical formula.

Somebody says that the most important fact in human life is that the geometrical symbol π equals 3.141592. I confess that I have not at the present moment more than the vaguest notion about the significance of that fact. And yet we live and move and have our being.

Nothing is plainer to everybody's sight and touch than matter. But matter is one of the great mysteries. No man of science has yet been able to say conclusively what matter is. Some say that matter is made of infinitely small and hard atoms; others say that matter is made of little perpetually whirling rings; still others hold that matter does not exist at all, that the only

thing that we can be absolutely sure of is a sensation in our eyes and ears and at the tips of our fingers. There is no doctrine in the science of theology that is more disputed than the doctrine of matter is in the science of physics.

These perplexities are inseparable from the endeavor after accurate definition. They belong to scientific thought. Difficulty is not found only in theology. The fact is that we can go only a certain distance in any direction; we can think only so far into things physical, mental, or spiritual. After that we get beyond our depth. We fall into all manner of confusion. And what the confusion means is not that we have come to the end of truth, but that we have come to the end of the strength of the human mind.

Nevertheless, common life is not affected by these scientific perplexities. The discussions of the scientific doctors as to the nature of matter do not deter us from building houses. We do not hesitate to walk abroad because there is a scientific uncertainty about the nature of space. These high matters make no difference with daily life.

The discussions of theology ought not to perplex any but the theologians. They have no more to do with religion than an acquaintance with chemistry has to do with eating, or a knowledge

of geology has to do with the appreciation of the beauties of a landscape. We can love God though we may not be able to recite the Athanasian creed. We can read our Bibles and get help out of them without needing to know anything about theories of inspiration. The nature of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not dependent upon the result of the controversies about it. Christ died for our sins. No matter about the doctrines of the atonement.

The difficulties of religion, then, belong to the scientific side of it. They are difficulties of definition. They are of the same sort with the difficulties which meet men in every direction of scientific thought. They have no more bearing upon common life than any other metaphysics.

As for the differences of religion, they arise, for the most part, out of the natural differences of human nature. They are due to temperament.

Religion is meant for all kinds of people; and there are a great many kinds of people. People are different; and a universal religion must have room in it for innumerable differences.

That is what Christ taught. That is what Paul taught. We have not even yet learned the lesson very well, but in the days of the beginnings of Christianity people had not learned it at all. It was accounted heresy. The orthodox contended

in those days that nobody could really be religious unless he was religious in just one way. He must become a Jew: he must keep every rubric of the Hebrew law.

Even Peter needs a revelation out of the sky before he can be persuaded to admit a Gentile into the Christian society. Even Paul must first be blinded by a light from heaven before he can shut his eyes to the difference between the Greek and the Hebrew, and care no more about it.

That there could be varieties of faith and practice in the same Church was a thing which to a good many people in that old day was as incredible, as undesirable, as dangerous, and as pernicious as it is to a good many good people still. The very first thing which the Christian religion did was to turn its back upon exclusion and uniformity. Alone among all the religious teachers of his time, Christ recognized the divine right of human differences. Christ saw that one man differs from another.

One would think that anybody must see so plain a fact as that. But every division into which the Church of Christ is to-day shamefully divided is a testimony to somebody's blindness. Every single sect means that somebody some time failed to recognize this inevitable fact of human difference, and quarreled with it. You might as well

quarrel with the law of gravitation. One after another the Christian Church has turned her children out-of-doors by trying to make them all alike, and disowning all who failed to fit the standard.

Those party names of "high" and "broad" and "low," which we hear more often than we like to, represent absolutely unchangeable and eternal differences in human nature. They symbolize different ways of emphasizing religious truth. There always have been and there always will be people with whom the most important part of religion is that side of it which looks toward God, and finds expression in worship. There always have been and there always will be people with whom the most important part of religion is that side of it which looks toward the soul, and finds expression in emotion. There always have been and there always will be people with whom the most important part of religion is that side of it which looks toward the world about them, and finds expression partly in the extension of Christian charity and in the uplifting of the bodies, minds, and souls of men, and partly in an endeavor to state religious truth so that it may commend itself to everybody's reason, and get hold of everybody's will. That is, there have always been "high" churchmen, and "low" churchmen,

and "broad" churchmen; and there always ought to be, and there always will be.

But somehow we have now these many centuries been behaving as if all men were made alike. We have somehow succeeded in persuading ourselves that everybody who is not exactly of our kind is wrong, and ought to be put out. And we did put out low-church Wesley, and we did put out high-church Newman, and we are busy just at this day trying to find some good "broad" churchman whom we may put out after them.

When the Christian missionaries from France and the Christian missionaries from Wales met in pagan England, they agreed that there was a great work for them to do, a work that needed all the energy they had. But the French said to the Welsh, "First, before we can work together, you must cut your hair exactly as we cut ours."

When the "low" churchmen, who were then called "Puritans," met the orthodox of their day in conference at Hampton Court, the orthodox said: "It is, indeed, a blessed thing that brethren shall dwell together in unity, but, dearly beloved, if you would say your prayers with us you must, above all else, wear the same kind of prayer-gown that we wear. Not one of you must be seen without a surplice." The result was the Presbyterian communion.

What we all need to recognize is that uniformity is impossible, and that variety is the law of nature nad of God. There are differences of administration, yes, but the same Lord. What we need to see is that the matters about which we differ belong wholly to the outside of religion. They really have no more to do with the heart of religion than the paint on the outside of an engine has to do with the running of the wheels. Questions as to ecclesiastical government, whether by bishops or by presbyters; questions as to clerical dress, the most trivial, one would think, of all things which might interest the mind of man; questions as to ritual, much or little water, standing or kneeling, singing hymns or singing psalms—how is it that Christians can make these matters synonymous with Christianity?

People are different; let them think differently. Whatever really helps is right. Whatever hinders is wrong. And what hinders one may help another. If the Church is a sect, if it is a little, petty, religious confraternity, then set Procrustes' bed at the door of it, and measure every comer, and cut off all the tall people's feet, and stretch out all the short people. But if the Church is a great, broad catholic Church, such as Christ meant it to be, let everybody in, and keep everybody in who loves him and wants to serve him. There is

a place in the wide Church catholic for every honest man that breathes.

We go back behind the difficulties of theology and the differences of temperament, and we find the "same Spirit," and the "same Lord," and the "same God which worketh all in all." And it is as clear and simple as the universal sunlight. When the minister stands by the bed of death to tell the Christian message over again, it does not much matter who he is, it is one simple story.

Christ is Christianity. Religion is part faith and part love. And the love part of it is simply a following in the steps of Jesus Christ, trying to be as like him as we can, going about doing good, as he did. All the ethical precepts of our religion are summed up in the example of Christ. And the faith part of it is simply a trusting of the words of Jesus Christ. He said he knew. And he told us plainly that God is our Father, and that there is a life beyond the grave. And we believe him. We take his word of teaching as a child takes the word of his father.

To try to live as Christ lived, to be content to take as true what Christ said, how simple that is! It is the beginning, and the middle, and the end of all religion.

FOUR WAYS OF LOVING GOD.

“THOU shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” That is St. Matthew’s record of Christ’s great commandment. “And with all thy strength,” St. Mark says, making it wider still.

Both of these gospel writers tell us that Jesus said also, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” But they both agree that he said that afterward, putting the other first, calling the other the “great” commandment, and this the “second.” The order is significant. Christ sets a peculiar emphasis upon the love of God. He wants us to love our neighbors; but, first of all and chief of all, he wants us to devote our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength to God.

This emphatic priority and preference is made particularly noticeable by the earnestness and persistence with which Jesus always insisted upon the observance of that other commandment which is here set second. It means a great deal,

that he was willing to put anything ahead of that.

No spiritual teacher ever laid a deeper emphasis than Jesus did upon man's duty to his fellow-men. All the altruisms, and socialisms, and secularisms, and ethical-culture-isms get their best inspiration out of the Christian gospel. Felix Adler, the leading ethical lecturer of this country, did indeed say to me the other day at Plymouth, that the province of religion lies in the domain of the affections, and that if we want real education in conduct we must go to philosophy. But Christ taught more about conduct than he did about anything else. The great purpose of religion, as he conceived of it, is to make men better. It is true that he appealed to the affections, for he who addresses the affections speaks a universal language. Everybody can understand him. And Christ wanted everybody to understand him. But it is also true that he appealed to the reason and to the will. No man ever breathed who had so lofty an ideal of human behavior, who attached so much importance to every-day morality, who insisted so strongly upon the translation of every spiritual truth into righteous speech and righteous action. He taught his disciples that the real test of a man's creed is the man's character; that there is no allowable

divorce between good belief and good behavior; that whoever loves God loves his brother also. In the ethics of Jesus these two go inseparably together; one is root and one is branch; one is cause and the other is consequence. No teachings have ever so uplifted man.

There is no danger that Christ will undervalue character, or cheapen morality, or set neighborly duty on a lower plane than belongs to it. Christ knows better than all the philosophers of all time the true worth of ethics.

And yet Christ sets conduct second. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is commandment number two. The supreme duty is Godward; God-ward first and then man-ward. The very first thing that Christ asks about a man is, Does he love the Lord our God? In the old torch-races that the Greeks ran in their games, no man's running counted for anything if the light in his torch went out. Before all else it was required that he keep that flame alive. And love for God, it seems, is the sacred, necessary flame in the race of human life. When we consider the profound emphasis that Jesus put upon brotherly love, we begin, as I said, to see how much it means that he set this even before that. God first. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with

all thy mind, and with all thy strength." We will love God a great deal if we love him as much as that!

See how wide are the limits of this emphatic "great" commandment; how boundlessly inclusive, and within the reach of everybody's obedience. God is the universal Father. There are all sorts and conditions of men in his great family. And there must be all sorts and conditions of regard for God. All of us different people must think of God in different ways, because we are different. No two children love their mother in exactly the same way; every mother knows that.

You see that the great commandment makes room for all these wide diversities. The strongest part of one man is the strength of his arm. He can do nothing so well as to pull and lift and push. Another is a great deal better at thinking than he is at lifting; cares more for books than he does for blocks of wood or steel; handles a pen more skillfully than any other tool; and is best at whatever occupies the energies of the mind. Other people attain their highest possibilities in their affections; cannot manage very heavy weights, nor make out very difficult problems, but are strong in believing, gifted with great capacities for trusting, blessed with deep

and warm affections. All these different natures approach God from different sides. Nobody loves God with heart, and soul, and strength, and mind alike. And here is the blessed temple of the love of God, lying four-square, facing the four corners of the earth, with a great wide-open door on every side, so that every man who will walk straight on in the path where God has placed him may come up to it, and find access and invitation and welcome, and may enter in.

There are four ways of loving God—with heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.

It is not easy to tell wherein the difference lies between the love of God with the heart and the love of God with the soul. Heart and soul seem to be words of very nearly the same meaning. We notice, however, when we think about it, that the soul signifies much more about a man than the heart. The heart is the seat of the emotions and affections; it is that part of our being with which we experience joy, and grief, and love. But the soul of a man is the man himself; it is the immortal, the spiritual, the divine part of us. The most blessed privileges, the profoundest realities of religion, are associated with the soul. Christ came to save our souls.

We love God, then, with the heart when we love him somewhat as the disciples loved the Master,

as St. John, whom he loved, loved him. We love him as Mary did when she cried, "Rabboni!" in the garden of the resurrection, and fell at his feet in adoration. There are blessed serene souls to whom God seems close as a personal friend. They are always conscious of his blessed presence. They trust him; they depend upon him; they go to him with all their troubles and temptations, with their blessings, sure of his attention, of his unfailing interest, of his help and sympathy. They delight in praying to him. They rejoice in reciting sentences of devotion. The still sanctuary, with its holy associations, its heavenly symbols, its company of silent worshipers, seems to them like an opening of the gates of pearl.

These devout disciples, like the old psalmist, are glad of every opportunity of going into the house of the Lord. The service satisfies them. They like the early communions in the quiet of the new morning. They are appreciative of everything that makes the church more beautiful; think as much of rites and ceremonies, of lights and colors, as Moses and Aaron did. They get the name of being ritualists, because they are not content to worship only with their hearts, but want to worship with their bodies also. They bow their heads and their knees, and cross themselves.

The books of devotion are written for these disciples, and it is for them that the church doors stand open between Sundays. They know what worship means. Religion, as they understand it, is profoundly sacramental. It signifies approach to God. There are some of these saints in every Christian communion. They love God with all their hearts.

There are other saints who love God with all their souls. To them the central fact in human life is the fact of sin, and the supreme blessing of religion is the blessing of salvation. Christ is pre-eminently the Saviour. Christianity is founded upon the atonement. The gospel is the good news of pardon. The chief concern of a Christian is about his soul. The most important part of the public service of religion is that which addresses the soul. The emphasis is upon the sermon. The most serious of all questions is, What shall I do to be saved?

The soul is that part of us which lasts, which goes on through the grave and gate of death into the mysteries beyond. They who love God with all their souls, and love him as the savior of their souls, think a great deal about this future of the soul. Every man stands every day separate and alone from all his fellows, in the plain sight of

God, actually and absolutely responsible to God for all that he does, and says, and is. And by and by is the judgment, when all souls shall meet the Judge, and there give solemn account of themselves to him.

Sin, salvation, responsibility, judgment, reward, punishment, eternity are great thoughts in the living and praying of people who think of religion in that way. You see the difference between these two phases of religion. They who love God with all their hearts look up to him, adore him, and seek his blessing with all his other children in his Church, in his appointed sacraments. They who love God with all their souls look in at their souls before they look up, are conscious that they stand each one by himself in the presence of that supreme Judge who has the final decision of all human destiny, and who hates sin; and they lay hold with all their might upon the hand of their Saviour, that he may assist and deliver them. It is the difference between the catholic and the protestant elements in our modern Christianity; the difference between the devotion of St. John and the penitence and faith of St. Paul.

Then there are still other Christians, who love God with all their minds. They are devoted seekers after truth, and count no discovery so desira-

ble as the discovery of truth. They seek truth in all parts of the great universe of God. Some in the sky, some in the rocks, some in the living creatures with which God has peopled this planet, some in the growth, the struggle, the achievement, the manifold experience of man. All truth is a revelation of God. All nature is God made partially visible to his children. All history is the record of the work of God in the betterment and instruction of the race. All study is the study of theology. Every search after the reason of things opens a window into the infinite, and gives the seeker glimpses of God. All the good books were written by the finger of the good God.

Some people get closer to God by getting closer to their fellow-men. They do not believe that God is up above the clouds, nor that he is shut in by all the doors and windows of all the churches. They think that whoever wants to find God will find him quickest where he has set his image and breathed his breath, in the midst of the great family of his human children.

“The parish priest
Of Austerlitz
Climbed up in a high church-steeple
To be nearer God,
So that he might hand
His word down to his people.

“And in sermon script
He daily wrote
What he thought was sent from heaven,
And he dropt this down
On his peoples’ heads
Two times one day in seven.

“In his age God said,
‘Come down and die!’
And he cried out from the steeple,
‘Where art thou, Lord?’
And the Lord replied,
‘Down here among my people!’”

Many who have learned that lesson hold that working is a better part of loving God than praying, that practicing is more acceptable to God than preaching, and that a man owes his supreme duty not to his own soul, but to the helping and the comforting of the soul of his less fortunate brother. They like to remember how Christ said, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me.” And so they apply their minds to the solution of the vast problems of poverty, and pain, and sin. They account that the best of all truth in this present hour and place is economic truth. They are religiously interested in sanitation, in temperance, in socialism, in all manner of reform and betterment. And they think that they can show their

love for God in no better fashion. They love God with their minds.

It has perhaps occurred to you already that these different ways of loving God represent those different temperaments which, as I often say, have always had their place and will always have their place in every company of Christian people. There must always be "high" churchmen, who love God with their hearts; and "low" churchmen, who love God with their souls; and "broad" churchmen, who love God with their minds. It is hard, many times, for one to understand the other. The low churchman thinks that the high churchman is given over to ceremony, and the broad churchman to skepticism. One of the most difficult things in the whole world is to understand and appreciate people who differ from us, especially those who seem to differ in the whole trend and spirit of their thinking. But there are different kinds of people, and even different kinds of saints. And another Christian may be unlike us in almost every particular, and yet love God as much, and be just as good a Christian as we are. The best plan is for each one of us to be the very best Christian he knows how to be, and let his brother take his own path into the great four-square temple of the love of God. Thank God, God knows us all!

Finally, there are people who love God with all their strength. That ought to take in every one of us.

We love God with all our strength when we do our work for him, for him to see. A man who breaks stone and breaks it well, and cares even more to have that stone well broken than to have the overseer notice that it is well broken, loves God with his strength. A maid who sweeps the corners of a room, and cares more to have the darkest corner absolutely clean than she does to have her mistress see that it is clean, loves God with her strength. Anybody who works well at anything, minding most of all how the work looks to God, who sees the top of it and the bottom of it, loves God with all his strength. St. Paul gives the rule for it: "Not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of God."

There is more love of God in the world than we think. The high churchmen and the low churchmen and the broad churchmen all together do not monopolize it. There will be a great many surprised people at the Day of Judgment. And some will be surprised to find that they have all their lives been loving God. There is a love of honesty, a love of honor, a love of virtue, a love of purity, which is really love of God. Whoever, for its own sake, loves the right loves God.

All the lovers of God love him in all four of these ways at once, with heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. The difference between people is not a difference of distinction, so that some love God with their hearts altogether and not with their souls at all. It is a difference of emphasis, just as everybody has some imagination, and some memory, and some reason; but with one the imagination is his most prominent and strongest quality; with another the reason; with another the memory. What we need to do is to cultivate that kind of love for God in which we find ourselves most lacking. If we love God most with our hearts, let us try to deepen in us the sense of sin, the realization of personal responsibility, and so love God more with our souls. If we love God most with our minds, let us try to deepen in us the feeling of reverence, the habit of worship, the attitude of adoration, and so love God more with our hearts.

THE INTERVIEW WITH NICODEMUS.

"THERE was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

That is what a teacher who came from the schools of Jerusalem said to the teacher who came from God. Thus began the interview of Christ with Nicodemus.

Nicodemus said that one night in a Jerusalem lodging-house, in the presence of Jesus Christ. Nicodemus was an old man, a Pharisee, a member of that great council of the Hebrew nation, the Sanhedrim; a man probably wealthy, certainly of important position, a "ruler of the Jews." Take an English bishop, and an English lord, and an English head-of-a-college, combine the three dignities in one person, and you get a glimpse of Nicodemus. That was the kind of

place he held in the estimation of the people of Jerusalem. A man of eminence, a leader in the world ecclesiastical, in the world intellectual, in the world political. When he passed along the road everybody knew him. If he were to knock at the door of a small house on a back street and go in, there would be twenty people to wonder why. Thus he went in the dark, upon a windy night, when the street would be empty, and he would be unseen.

Jesus of Nazareth, with whom this great man held this secret interview, had come down a few days before out of Galilee, where his home was, and had set all tongues to talking about him, in consequence of a singular occurrence in the Temple. It was the time of the Passover, and the city was crowded with visiting worshipers. The Temple court was thronged with people, coming to pay their church taxes and to offer their accustomed sacrifices. In order to pay their taxes they had to get their money changed into Hebrew coin; and in order to offer their sacrifices they had to have doves and sheep and oxen. And Annas, the high-priest, had accordingly turned a part of the great church into a market. The tables of the brokers, the stalls of the cattle, the seats of them that sold doves, were the center of unceasing noisy traffic. The Temple officials had

a monopoly of this religious business, and a most irreligious use they made of it. It was an illustration of that amazing and scandalous paradox which every day finds example somewhere—the impiety of the pious, the rascality of the righteous. They stole money out of poor men's pockets. The whole thing was an organized desecration, a consecrated robbery. And now, of a sudden, when the crowds were greatest, had come in Jesus of Nazareth, of whom nobody had heard before, a young man not past thirty, a carpenter's son from a country village back in Galilee; in he had come, bringing a whip with him, and had actually driven out the whole company of thieves and robbers into the street.

Everybody was talking about him. He had a little company of disciples with him, peasants and fishermen from Galilee. He was teaching wherever he could find listeners, saying strange things. A radical, a communist, the herald of a social revolution, a man who cared a great deal for the common people, but very little, so they said, for either Church or state. He wanted to put the old out, and to bring in a new condition of things which, he said, was better, called the "kingdom of heaven," part of whose programme consisted in putting down the mighty from their seats and exalting these of low degree, in filling the hungry

with good things and sending the rich empty away. Suspicious utterances! What has this eminently respectable and conservative Nicodemus to do with this Galilean agitator?

Nicodemus was evidently one of those of whom it was written in the record: "Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed on his name, beholding his signs which he did." Here, accordingly, is a man with an open mind, nothing narrow nor intolerant about him. Plainly he had been impressed. This strange young enthusiast out of the north, bent on overturning all the old, evil institutions of the time, beginning with the tables of the money-changers, had evidently won the deep attention of this conservative aristocrat. The fact is significant.

There are people whom the arguments of the Archangel Gabriel could not move out of their accustomed way. Their eyes are tight shut. They have made up their minds and locked them, and there is the end of it. Christ met such men every day. The age was one of pronounced hostility to new truth. Only the old was true. The old dead doctors, the old dead confessions of faith, dominated the whole thought of the day.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time," was the preface to the utterance of in-

fallibility. When Christ said, "But I say unto you," all who heard that independent pronoun held their breath. Here was a man with an opinion, with a mind of his own. It was amazing! It was astounding!

All honor, then, to Nicodemus, who heard new truth taught in the streets, and wanted to hear more of it, and was willing to take the risk of embarrassing discovery and serious consequences to make a visit to this new teacher. It is true he came by night, and was not so brave as he might have been, and went away afterward and took his old place among the doctors. He was no great hero. But it is worth a great deal, and speaks well for Nicodemus, that he came at all.

And Nicodemus seems to say that he is not alone in this laudable curiosity. "*We know*," he says, "that thou art a teacher come from God." Who are the others, sharers in this knowledge? Eminent men, no doubt, rulers, Pharisees, companions of Nicodemus. We seem to get a whisper here from the secret councils of the Sanhedrim. Nicodemus came alone, but behind were others waiting to question him, eager to learn whatever he might learn. Even in the most narrow generation new truth finds its way into some hearts. Christ comes to his own and his own receive him not; but some receive him. Some Nicodemus,

though it be by night, searches him out. There is more good in the world, more earnestness, more "thirst for God," than the world gets credit for. "We know that thou art a teacher come from God." They said that in their hearts. They went on, day by day, keeping the old customs, changing scarcely at all; nobody dreamed of calling them followers of Christ. And yet the words of Christ were in their ears and in their hearts. And they were in secret disciples of Christ. And who will say that that is not better than being no disciple of Christ at all? Like men to-day who stand outside the Church and never say that they are on Christ's side, and yet are on Christ's side in secret.

Let Christ come to-day, a poor man, a working-man in his working clothes, a street preacher at the corners of our familiar streets, with no approbation from society, with disapproval from the press and the pulpit, promising food for the hungry and poverty for the rich, preaching a "kingdom of heaven," who would listen? Would it not be once again the "common people"? Where is the rich man, where is the conservative Christian, where is the orthodox parson, who would seek him out, even after dark, in his tenement-house lodging, and tell him he believed in him? Would we do that? That is what Nicodemus did.

Now, Jesus of Nazareth wanted his new truth

to get into the hearts of all men. And anybody might have told him that the quickest way to do that was to persuade wealth and influence over to his side. And here was his easy opportunity. Here was Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, interested even to the point of taking risks, standing in his own room, and asking, with astonishing condescension, to be taught. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." That was the first step to discipleship.

The conversation that follows is plainly but a brief fragment of what was said that night. But it is evident from what is written that Jesus did not show any unusual eagerness in receiving his unusual visitor. For wealth, for position, for influence of intellectual men, for most of the outside advantages which a new movement is accustomed to account of value, Jesus cared absolutely nothing. He went out of his way one time to get into the company of his disciples a man named Matthew, a publican, the most unpopular man in Capernaum. But when a rich young enthusiast came to him running, holding out his hands, eager to follow him, and ready to bring his money with him, Jesus said that he must leave his money all behind and come in poor. And when this influential Pharisee, rich and of high position, a man of dignity and learning, seeks him out, sets

himself at his feet, and asks to be taught, Jesus says: Nicodemus, the first thing for you to do is to begin all over again. You must break with your past. Your office, your money, your book-learning will count for nothing if you come with me. The only distinction among my disciples is a distinction of character. You must be born again. You must begin at the very beginning before you can so much as see the kingdom of heaven. And the old man would not do that. The conditions were too hard for him. The conversation breaks off suddenly in the record, and nothing is said about the answer of Nicodemus. But he did not come out openly for Christ. We know that. He kept his office.

Nothing can be imagined more unworldly than this interview with Nicodemus. To Christ a man was of consequence exactly in proportion to his manhood. No other consideration entered in. He cared just as much for a poor man as he did for a rich man, and just as much for a rich man as he did for a poor man. That is, he cared for the man. He set no more account upon the man's position, or popularity, or money than he did upon the color of his hair. As for the notion that influential names would help his cause, nothing could have been further from his wish. He wanted no man to be his disciple because Peter belonged

to the company of the disciples, or because Nathanael belonged among them. He wanted no man to come in because another man had come. He looked ahead, no doubt, with apprehension to the day when Christianity would become popular. He knew that all the rulers, and all the Pharisees, and all the great and rich would some time proclaim themselves upon his side, and he dreaded that time. He wanted disciples who would believe in him with their own free faith, and accept his truth with minds which recognized and appreciated it; who would really love him, and him alone above all others; and who would be determined to stand upon his side though nobody else stood there the whole world over.

And Jesus looked into the eyes of Nicodemus, and he saw that he was not that sort of disciple, and he did not want him. Yes, he wanted him—but changed first; a man with a new heart, born again. He did not want the Nicodemus that he saw. He listened to him, and he answered him with a truth which tested him. And Nicodemus did not stand the test.

For Nicodemus was not really convinced. He was impressed, there is no doubt of that, and strongly impressed, but he was not fully persuaded. Listen to him: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can

do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him."

I would rather hear Nicodemus say "I" than "we." That would sound better. That is the way the Christian creed begins, with that significant pronoun "I." The Christian stands alone, as he will stand in the Day of Judgment, and looks up into the face of God, and speaks for his own self. Others may say this or that; thus and so may the official teachers teach; here or there may blow the wind of popular doctrine; but I, holding up my hand alone, with all my heart hold this. That is the attitude of Christian faith. There is something evasive, timid, half-persuaded about this desire to get among a crowd and say "we know."

And then, notice how Nicodemus thinks of Christ. He is a teacher and a miracle-worker. Nicodemus has been won to admiration by his doctrines, and has been struck with amazement by his wonders. That, indeed, is the beginning of discipleship. Men everywhere come under the influence of Christ by the attraction of his words and of his works. But Christ was not content that any man should stop there. He wanted more than that. He was not satisfied with admiration; he wanted allegiance. "The Jews ask for signs," St. Paul says, "and the Greeks seek after wisdom."

The Jews will be persuaded if you can show them a miracle, and the Greeks will be convinced if you can bring them to the conclusion of an argument. "But we preach Christ crucified," he says, "unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." There it is. Nicodemus is part Jew and part Greek; he has seen signs and heard wisdom, so he comes. Christ wants him to be altogether Christian. He wants him to translate his wonder and his admiration into love. Do you not see how Nicodemus stands off and looks at Christ from a distance? Do you not feel a difference between the courteous respect of Nicodemus and the warm affection of John and Peter?

There is what the matter is with Nicodemus. Let no man think that Christ is satisfied with such discipleship. Christ may be your philosopher and saint and hero; you may regard him as the wisest of all teachers, as the flower of humanity; you may even confess that there is something divine about him, that he worked wonders, that he came from God. And yet you may still stand only in the steps of Nicodemus.

No, Nicodemus was not really convinced. He says that he knows that Jesus was a teacher come from God. Listen to that, and look at Nicodemus

shutting the door behind him and going out into the dark ! For what shall a man do when he has discovered a "teacher come from God" ? Why, follow him devotedly, and obey him unreservedly. Between the whole unanimous Sanhedrim on one side and a teacher come from God on the other, what sane man will hesitate ? Who will care what the fathers said, who will mind what the brethren say, when he can listen to a teacher come from God ? What is wealth, place, dignity, popularity, beside allegiance to a teacher actually come from God ? But Nicodemus did not believe what he said. He said "we know"; and very likely he thought he spoke the truth, but he did not "know" at all. For Nicodemus did not follow Christ. He listened to him, and went away impressed, no doubt, more deeply than ever, but still not impressed enough. Secretly he reverences him. But he does not really believe that he is a teacher come with a message from the Most High God.

By and by the chief priests and the Pharisees send officers to arrest this divine teacher, and the officers come back empty-handed, crying, "Never man spoke like this man !" They did not dare to touch him. Whereupon the rulers answer scornfully, "Are ye also led astray ?" Then speaks Nicodemus, "Doth our law judge a man

except it first hear him and know what he doeth?" He has, perhaps, a hope that if Christ can but speak to them as he spoke that night to him, they may be persuaded. But they exclaim, "Art thou also of Galilee?" And Nicodemus has not a word to say. This man is not convinced. This creed of his is not the Christian creed; and even such as it is, he does not actually believe it. He would stand up in the council if he did, and say so.

Nicodemus, then, went away after a whole evening's talk with Jesus Christ, and stayed outside the Christian company. A good man, a man of estimable character, a religious man in many ways, a man of wealth and education, and of standing in the community, one of the rulers. This good man heard a sermon preached for his own particular benefit by Jesus Christ himself, and after the sermon he went on, so far as anybody could see, in just the same old way. Even the Master's sermon did not persuade him into the company of the disciples, into open and confessed allegiance, into the Church.

That is a good thing for the discouraged preacher to remember. Nicodemus comes to church Sunday after Sunday, and the preacher has him in his mind when he prepares his sermon and when he preaches it. He prays Sunday after Sunday that his sermon may persuade the

good Nicodemus to take the next step, to speak out what he is hiding in his heart, and to come into the Church. And Nicodemus listens, and listens, and listens, always with attention; and after the service he gets up and goes out, and there is the end of it. And the preacher sometimes thinks that he might as well preach to the posts and pillars.

God help Nicodemus, for somehow we cannot help him!

But Nicodemus never forgot that interview with Jesus Christ, never lost that sermon out of his heart, was not just the same man after it that he was before. One day the Teacher met the fate which he foresaw from the beginning. And then, beneath the shadow of the cross, when even those who had followed him had fled away into hiding-places, came Nicodemus forth, braving the scorn of all men, bringing a great and costly offering of myrrh and spices for his burial. Nicodemus did, at last, stand out upon the side of Christ. "I, if I be lifted up," he had heard the Master say that night, "will draw all men unto me." And here that word began to find fulfillment. Christ crucified convinced him.

RELIGION ON BUSINESS PRINCIPLES.

WHATEVER may be said about the need of religious principles in business, there can be no question as to the need of certain business principles in religion. Christ himself pronounced the children of this world wiser than the children of light.

We do not talk much nowadays about the "children of this world" or the "children of light." These old phrases have ceased out of our modern conversation. We never hear them on Monday. They need translation. But what they mean when we set them over into the language of our day is quite plain to see and easy of understanding. The children of this world are the people who think more about this world than they do about the next, and the children of light are the people who have been taught better than that, who ought to see clearer than that.

It is true that there is no such sharp distinction possible in human society as would enable us to

divide our neighbors into these two classes, and set some here on the right, and others there on the ignominious left. God will do that one of these days. But, meanwhile, "Judge not before the time" is a good rule. We will be wiser to leave it alone. The Puritans tried it once, and wrote down as sinners all who did not speak the accent of their excellent company. But the Puritans were mistaken. Saints and sinners are somehow inextricably intermingled in the tangle of human life. The tares and the wheat look so astonishingly alike that even the best theological botanists cannot certainly distinguish the one from the other. We would better let them alone.

We are safe, however, in recognizing the "world" and the "light" as representing the two divisions into which all the interests of life must fall, the eternal and the transitory. These two divisions divide between them the thoughts of every human being. Even the saint cannot give his absolutely undivided attention to things eternal. Bread and butter are not eternal. The differences which God sees among us, which enable him to know some of us as the children of the world, and others of us as children of light, are differences of emphasis. The question is not a question of exclusion, but of preference. We must care for both the transitory and the perma-

ment; we must think about the things that perish and the things that last. But which do we think about and care about the most? That is what God looks to see.

And Christ says that a good many people are wiser about transitory things than they are about eternal things; that they put more sense into their business than they do into their religion.

Everybody in this world who has any sense at all desires to succeed in religion. For it is evident, upon the least reflection, that that is the only permanent success. There will be no money in the world to come. Among the "many mansions" of the holy city there will be none of the significant differences which we see about us here. There will be no tenement-houses. And there will be no social distinctions in that other country, except the differences which are based on actual character. The question as to what this man or that is "worth" will not be answered there by any sum of dollars. All that we leave behind us when we die. The only success that lasts is success in religion.

And religion has to do with God; there is no religion without God. You know what the Bible says about good works without faith. It says that they are dead; that they count for nothing at all; do not exist; and faith is the upward look

toward God. You know what St. Paul says about charity: that a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet if he have not charity it profits nothing. And charity is the love that a man has for God. Let nobody think that he can be religious without God. Morality is not religion; there is as much difference between morality and religion as there is between a dead man and live man. The difference is in that vital spark, sometimes called faith, sometimes called charity, which brings the soul into conscious relation with God.

You may be the most moral man that ever kept the last six commandments, but unless you live your good life thinking of God, desiring the approbation and fearing the displeasure of God, striving to learn the will of God, and loving God, "one thing thou lackest," and that a lack so immeasurably important that all else is ruined by that lack. I do not believe that any child who did not care for his father ever really pleased his father. Religion is the pleasing of God our Father. Morality is the pleasing of one's self or one's neighbors. The most important fact that enters into human life is the fact of the existence of God. Without God there is no religion.

Now, what we want is success in religion. And what I desire to say is that success in religion,

like success in business, depends on certain business principles.

One of these business principles is, that nobody can do anything without trying. Nobody can make any progress in either business or religion without trying. There is no success without attention. There is no way in this world in which to get something for nothing except stealing. Whoever wants anything worth having must work for it.

Some people seem to think that the religious life will somehow look after itself, that it can get along without attention. But men know better than that in business. The goods will not sell themselves, the bills will not pay themselves; there are a thousand things that must be done, must be looked after, must be set down in the books and added up, must be thought out and decided every day. The business man who makes a success of business gives his mind to it. Why, not even a garden, nor the roof of a house, will get along without attention. Whoever would make a success of religion must give attention to religion.

That means an endeavor, all day long and every day, to please God. It means an applying of the test of the approbation of God to every detail of our ordinary life. We know pretty well

what sort of things please God. We know that telling the honest truth pleases him, and straightforward dealing and brotherly speech, and the endeavor to help those who are down. The Sermon on the Mount is not written in the Bible for nothing.

Now, to please God is the purpose of religion just as much as money-making is the purpose of business. Let us see, then. We know, for example, what kind of words please God just as well as we know what kind of bargains make money. Do not enter into that sale, because you will lose by it. Lose what? Lose money, lose success in business. Do not utter that speech, because you will lose by it. Lose what? Lose character, lose the approbation of God, lose success in religion. Who will set up a comparison between these losses? Who will balance duty against dollars? Who will do more to keep the good-will of a customer than to keep the good-will of the Lord God Almighty? And yet does everybody shun a bad word like a bad bargain? Are not the children of this world wiser sometimes than the children of light?

Another good business principle, which is just as good in religion as it is in business, is this: that a man ought to be looking out all the time for new ideas, new methods, new improvements,

better conditions. It is not enough that a man keep faithfully at work ; that never wins any but the lowest stages of success. Whoever is content with that stays where he is, never gets on. The man who gets on is all the time working, not only at his business, but at himself. He wants to make himself better than his business, and then to bring his business up after him. For success in anything depends on the man.

Accordingly, the alert business man keeps his eyes open ; nothing in the paper misses him which he can turn to account. Every good book which deals with his department of industry he reads. Wherever he goes he looks around to learn something ; nothing pleases him better than to get into the company of the masters of his trade.

Now, if any man desires to make a success of religion, let him not think that he can attain it in any other way than that. The elementary processes are just the same. There is a difference in gardening between raising wheat and raising roses, but they both need the earth and the sun and the rain. These are essential conditions. And the essential conditions of success in religion and in business are identical.

And yet who does not know men, men of business sense, who seem to have no religious sense at all ? Surely they do not wish to make a failure

of religion. Surely they are not disposed to venture their immortal souls. But what are they doing to make themselves good men of religion which can compare with what they are doing daily to make themselves good men of business? Where in this supreme interest of human life is that search for opportunity and seizure of it, that hospitality to new truth, that constant endeavor after betterment, that desire to learn, which we see in lesser things? These men think that they can succeed in religion upon conditions which, in every other department of life, mean nothing but flat failure. For example, it is notorious that a good many bright men are not to be seen in the churches. Anybody can make a list in two minutes of active merchants, lawyers, clerks, architects, physicians, who are busy and alert every day in the week, except Sunday. They do not miss a business opportunity once a year, but they miss a religious opportunity once every seven days. They are active members of every association which touches the business side of their life, but you will not find their names on the communicant list of any church. They are prominent everywhere except in the Christian congregation.

They desire to make the most of their life. Every one of them would say that. And they do

not believe that death is the end of life; very few of them would say that. They believe that life goes on through the gate of death, and only gets broader and better on the other side. And they know that the next life depends on this life, just as surely as to-morrow is built upon to-day. And they know that there will be no law cases, and no diseases for prescription, and no buying and selling, no iron mills or railroads in the world to come. The transitory will pass away; only the eternal will be of interest in eternity. They know that the soul is better than the body, and that religion is really of more consequence even than money-making. But they are not fulfilling the conditions of religious success.

I do not believe that church-going is by any means synonymous with religion. But I know that it is a fairly accurate symbol of religion. Neither is a thermometer synonymous with heat. But there is a good deal of significance in what the thermometer says. Church attendance is at least the thermometer of religion. And when it stands at zero the chances are that religious enthusiasm is pretty cold. People who are interested in business are to be seen at the desk or behind the counter at their work. And people who are really interested in religion are likely to be seen at church. That which indicates failure

in business is not a good condition of success in religion.

What we ask, then, of every intelligent man who desires to make a success of the best part of his life is that he will simply bring some of his business principles into religion—at least these two, the principle of attention and the principle of advancement. Certain it is that no kind of desirable success can be won anywhere without trying, and trying hard. We cannot sleep out “our own salvation”; we must “work” it out.

THE BORDER OF HIS GARMENT.

"IF I may but touch the border of his garment, I shall be whole."

A woman who has been sick twelve years, and has spent all her money to no purpose paying doctors' bills, may be forgiven for a lack of faith. I mean a lack of faith in doctors.

We must not think that the woman of Capernaum, who came in this evil case to Christ, knew him as we know him, or thought of him at all as we think of him. To this poor woman Jesus was only another doctor—a wonderful doctor, no doubt, better than any of the others, but yet a doctor; probably nothing more. He had no halo about his head, such as he wears in the old pictures. He dressed like other men, and spoke like other men, and walked like other men along the Capernaum street. And yet this woman saw in a moment that he was different from all the other doctors. It marks the strong impression that

Jesus made upon this woman's mind that she should have ventured, after that discouraging experience, to try again.

Indeed, as she regarded it, there was no venture at all. She was quite sure about it. "If I may but touch the border of his garment, I shall be whole." And the woman was right. She did touch the border of his garment and was made whole.

The first thing to think about is that Jesus noticed this touch upon the border of his garment.

It all happened, you remember, in a crowd. An important citizen of Capernaum, a ruler of the synagogue there, by name Jairus, had come to the Master, no doubt in haste, running through the narrow streets, beseeching him to come and save his daughter; "for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a-dying." And the Master and his disciples started with the ruler upon this errand of mercy. And the people thronged about him. Capernaum was but a little town, where everybody knew everybody else. The people in those Eastern countries live in the streets. The sidewalk was the daily paper at Capernaum, the only one they had. And when the ruler of the synagogue, with tears in his eyes, went hurrying along the street, everybody saw him. And when he came back with the

Master in his company, all Capernaum was watching; and they all went on together. The people crowded upon him, thronged and pressed him, the record says, as Jesus went.

And in the crowd was this woman. And she reached out her hand, thrusting it in, perhaps, between the jostling men, and touched him, touched just the border of his garment. And at once he stopped, and looked about him, and said, "Who touched me?" And they answered, naturally enough, that a dozen people were touching him. The crowd was so close about him that he had hardly room to walk. And yet he said, "Somebody hath touched me." And then the woman came and fell down before him, and told all that had happened, how she had touched and been healed. Jesus noticed even that little timid touch upon the border of his garment.

The life of the Master is of immeasurable importance to us in every smallest detail of it, not only because it teaches us about duty, but because it teaches us about God. God is like Jesus. Jesus came to be the revelation of God. There is no mystery about that; we do not get that out of the theologies. Evidently, we may be sure of this, that God is at least as good as the best man that ever lived. And we know very well that the ideal life was lived in Galilee. He that hath seen

Christ hath seen the Father. Whoever knows Jesus Christ knows God.

God, especially, is as loving as Christ was. God is as attentive as Christ was to the faintest call of the most timid disciple. Every touch upon the farthest corner of the garment of God, God feels. There is nobody so hidden in a crowd as to be unseen of God. There is no disciple so obscure, so poor, so insignificant, so weak, as to be out of the range of the attention of God. The very smallest prayer of the very smallest child is heard of God. Even the hidden thought, the trembling resolution, the unspoken aspiration after better love for God, which lies away back in the heart and no man ever knows of, is known of God.

Indeed, that modest touch was esteemed by the Master above all the pushing and jostling of the multitude. There were men crowding him so close that day that he could scarcely stir, who were not touching him—in his sense of the word—at all. We have got to be close to Christ in love and faith in order to touch him. The length and the loudness of men's prayers do not commend them to the ear of God. People's professions do not count for very much with him. One is inclined to wonder if the sanctimonious talk of a good many obtrusively pious people is not as displeasing to God as it is to the most of us. Cer-

tain it is, that those with whom Christ found least in common when he lived here, were the people who made the most pretensions to religion. Out of every service, out of the presence of every spiritual opportunity, we go as they went that day out of that crowd in Capernaum, some helped and some not helped at all. And it will many times be found that they who take a blessing with them are those who, like the publican, have scarce dared to lift up so much as their eyes to heaven, or, like the woman, have ventured only to touch the border of his garment.

Another good thing to think about is that Jesus rewarded the woman's touch, not only in spite of its faintness, but in spite of all the mistaken ideas that were implied in it.

This woman, as I have already suggested, had probably but a blundering notion about Christ. She knew not who he was. She had heard that he had been going about all that country doing good, healing the sick. The great man of the neighborhood, the ruler of the synagogue, was testifying to his own confidence in the power of Christ by calling him to the deathbed of his little daughter. It was the talk of the town. And the woman had heard it, as we hear to-day of the faith cure,—only with a tenfold emphasis. She had come out to meet this great physician.

That was probably the highest thought she had about him. It does not appear that there was any religion in the woman's motive, nor any spiritual side to it. One thing she knew: that she was sick, and that out there in the street, coming along past her own house, was the best doctor she had ever heard of. She did not even pray. She simply touched his clothes.

The act itself was superstitious. It has a fair parallel in the mediæval adoration of relics. It belongs, with the bones of the saints, and the wood of the true cross, and the miraculous Madonnas, to the materialistic side of faith. It has an illustration to-day in the people who are crowding to touch the Holy Coat at Treves. That was what the woman did. She touched the Holy Coat. She said, "If I may but touch the border of his garment, I shall be whole." And wonder of wonders! her touch brought benediction.

God blesses even the mistaken. One who looks over the list of the healed and helped in the life of the Master discovers that a great proportion of them were people of the most questionable orthodoxy.

The greatest mistake of all is probably that which we ourselves make about the nature of faith. It was the woman's faith which made her whole. That is what Christ said. But we look

in vain through the record of her healing for the conventional tests of faith. No metaphysics here; no theology apparent, no recitation of any creed. Yet these things enter into the common idea of faith. Faith, indeed, is not unfrequently considered to be made up of just these things and little else. Men and women have been burned for heresy who have been just as orthodox as she who held Christ to be but a human doctor, and who touched the border of his garment. People who believe in transubstantiation and relic worship, and people who do not believe in the theological definitions of the divinity of our Lord, are alike akin to this woman whose faith Christ blessed. If the door into the kingdom of heaven opens wide enough for her, it opens wide enough for them. There is apparently a difference between Christ and some Christians as to the nature of faith.

Faith, if we are to accept the inference of this scene in the Capernaum street, is essentially a personal allegiance to Jesus Christ. Whoever is drawn to him from any motive, whoever reverences and trusts him in any way, touches the heart of Christian faith.

One of the most hopeful signs in the religious world to-day is the disposition to simplify the idea of faith. The old metaphysical "confes-

sions" are being recognized as wide of the mark. It is getting to be seen that a man might accept, and believe, and even enthusiastically teach every one of the Thirty-nine Articles, or the whole of the Westminster Confession, or the entire Catechism of the Council of Trent, and yet be only in the position of those jostlers in the crowd, pushing Christ but not "touching" him; while another man outside the Church, saying "no" to all the formularies, putting no trust in any system of theological metaphysics, but simply trying to do the will of Christ, might, like this woman, win the blessing of the Master. We are turning away, as she did, from the doctors—in our case, the theological doctors—and we are seeking only Christ. We will get health for our souls in that direction, in no other.

We have been setting ourselves, I am afraid, to be stricter than Christ, narrower than Christ, more Christian than Christ. The twelve apostles could not pass the entrance examination into some Christian churches. There is no need, I think, to be more orthodox than Christ.

One more good thing to think about in this woman's story is the fact that Jesus, though he was content with a very simple faith, was not content without an open confession of that faith.

He stopped and looked about him in the crowd,

and said, "Who touched me?" He waited till the woman who was healed came and declared herself. She was already healed. The blessing of health had been given her in all abundance. But that was not the end of it. She must come trembling, and fall down before him, and declare unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he must send her away with his word of blessing: "Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace."

The parallel with this in our spiritual life is what we call "joining the Church." It is not to get an added blessing that we make that open confession of Christian allegiance; though there is an added blessing, too. The supreme blessing has already come. Out of some sickness, out of some sorrow, out of some new sense of spiritual need, we have looked into the face of Jesus, we have recognized Jesus. We have been spending our money to no purpose with the physicians. We have called in the doctors of philosophy and the doctors of divinity. And they have prescribed for us. They have given us doses of metaphysics hard to swallow. And they have not helped us at all. And at last we have turned to Christ, to the real, personal Christ, to the supreme spiritual

Master of the simple gospel. We may know very little about him; we may be as mistaken as this woman; but we have known enough to be as sure as she was that he can help us. And we have reached out our hands to him, and touched, it may be, only the border of his garment. And Christ has helped us. We have said to ourselves, "At least I can be thus much of a Christian; I can try to make the will of Christ the standard of my daily life; I can try to live in my town as he lived in Capernaum." And so we have got the blessing of strength. Or we have said, "At least I can do this; I can take his word as the way out of the darkness. God is my loving Father; my dear ones who are out of sight are in his tender keeping, and I shall meet them, for he said so. Jesus, who knows so much more than I ever can about all these mysteries, said that. And I believe it." And so we have got the blessing of comfort.

Then what shall we do? Why, then, confess him before men. Did that make the woman any better in her body? Probably not: she was cured already. Will that make us any better in our souls? Perhaps not. The supreme blessing to our souls has come already. But Jesus asks it. It is an act of open acknowledgment and gratitude which we owe to him. That is one part

of it. And it is a testimony to him which may help our neighbor. That is another part of it. These are two great reasons for the confession of Christ: because we love him, and because we want to help our brother.

If Jesus has brought us strength in temptation, comfort in sorrow, silence does not befit us. We may not stay back unnoticed in the crowd, making no sign, uttering no acknowledgment, letting him go on without a word. It is not a very great thing which he asks of us in return for his immeasurable blessing. It is the most reasonable, the most fitting, the most natural thing in the world. He asks us to declare unto him before all the people how we have touched him and been healed.

And that will help our neighbor. The doctors do not advertise in the newspapers. The doctor's advertisements are his patients. The doctor's practice grows, as one tells another how the doctor helped him. The Great Physician gets new patients in like manner. Christianity grows in the world by the influence of personal testimony. Every good man who has discovered a great truth, who has found a way to help, wants to tell somebody else.

The Christian is not content till he has made somebody else Christian. People want proof of

the Christian religion, and the best proof is to be seen not in a book, but in a life; not in a controversy, but in a character; not in a creed, but in a Christian. I know that Christ helped me: that one sentence outweighs all the intellectual arguments for religion. It is the invincible argument of personal experience. This at least is true. And if this be true, all the rest matters little. The supreme helpfulness of the personal Christ is the one truth whose recognition makes religion. Every man or woman who bears testimony to this blessed and realized helpfulness of Christ helps somebody else. We all want help. We are all looking for it. Here it is in the hand of Christ. That is what the act of joining the Church testifies to. That is the benefit of a confession of allegiance.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT.

WE are all clients of the lawyer who came to Christ with that deep question, Which is the great commandment in the law? He represents us when he asks that. We all want to know that.

It is true that the lawyer asked the question according to his legal habit, not for his own information, but, as we would say, for the information of the jury. The jury was the crowd of citizens and countrymen who were gathered about the Master in the Temple. Some were on his side; some were against him. There was a great discussion going on about him. The Sadducees had had their turn at questioning him, thinking to bring discredit upon his teachings; and his wisdom had put them to silence. And now came the Pharisees, with the lawyer at their head, "tempting" him, the record tells us—that is, putting him to test, setting him on trial, trying to catch him in his answers. There was no religion in the question of the lawyer. Here is no eager

disciple running to the Master, demanding what he should do to inherit eternal life. There was no thought of discipleship in the lawyer's heart.

There is always this possibility of wide distance between theology and religion. The discussion of doctrine, the determining of duty, may be no more religious than the transactions of the Stock Exchange. The distinction between the sacred and the secular does not depend on the subjects that men talk about, nor on the places where men meet to talk about them, nor on the profession or the position of the debaters. An election is not made sacred by the fact that the people are voting for a bishop, nor is it made secular by the fact that the people are voting for a congressman. A good many political speeches have been really more religious than a good many sermons. We must not think that people are religious—either ourselves or others—because they talk a great deal about religion. They may be just as much opposed to that which is best in religion as this questioning lawyer.

The difference between the sacred and the secular is altogether a difference of spirit. That is what God looks at and cares for. We read that one day at the Feast of Pentecost the Holy Spirit passed by the splendid Temple altogether, and overlooked the high-priest in his gorgeous vest-

ments, and chose rather to visit a common house somewhere in the city—just an ordinary house, with a flat roof and a courtyard, and a pair of stairs on the outside, like a thousand others—and to grant his special benediction to a company of common people there assembled in their working-clothes. It is the heart that makes men worthy or unworthy in the sight of God, and not the pious lips.

This is a significant figure, this lawyer standing in Christ's presence, looking straight into his face, questioning him, listening with respectful attention to his answer, and having within him not one smallest trace of the faintest purpose to follow what the Master said. At the best, he had an intellectual interest in Christianity, nothing more. There was a gambler in New York who, it seems, had for years attended a Christian service every Sunday. He never knelt down, he said, nor answered "Amen" to any of the prayers. He had never joined the Church, nor had he ever made any difference in his real living. He said that he went to that church because he liked the preacher; he considered him the finest preacher in the city of New York! There are people not so bad as that in all the churches. They show an interest in religion by their constant presence, as this lawyer showed his interest by his presence

and his question. And they listen, like the lawyer, to all the praying and the preaching. And they go away, a hundred times a year, and one year after another, and never make a change in their living, never get any closer than they were at the beginning to Christian discipleship—at least, so far as we can see; nobody knows what God sees.

And yet there are times in every life when the lawyer's question is asked in earnest, not as the lawyer asked it. The "great commandment,"—what is it but the divine ideal of that which is the first and chief essential in human character? When we learn it we know what God cares most for in the temper and disposition of his children. We discover what our heavenly Father most desires to see in us. And we all want to discover that. That is the discovery of discoveries.

For we are all of us honestly discontented. The better we are, the less are we satisfied with ourselves. Not one of us but has some sort of vision of a higher life, and is aware of the distance between that vision and the every-day reality. We know what kind of men and women we should like to be. But our ideal changes. Sometimes it is but a low achievement that we find ourselves striving after. We think that money

may, perhaps, content us; we will be satisfied if we can but gain some sort of worldly prize. It is evident enough that some people seem to have no higher ambition than such as this. They bend all things this way. They appear to be willing any day to trade a heavenly mansion for a good stone house on a salable corner.

On the other hand, in proportion as men and women keep the will of God, so their ideal of right living is more and more uplifted. Character is seen to be the richest of all treasures.

Now what we want, with our ideals going up and down like the mercury in a thermometer according as our zeal is hot or cold, is to know what the standard is. We want something to measure by. And we do not need anybody to teach us that the one accurate judge of human life is he who set human life a-going in this world. That alone is best which is accounted best by God.

And so we come in good earnest to the lawyer's question. When we are honest with ourselves, when we stand up and look out into the interminable sky, when we contemplate the certain end of this life and the mysterious beginning of another, and realize that in spite of all the noise and jostle of the busy day we are still alone with God, and must give account of ourselves to God,—then we ask in all soberness what God

thinks of this human life of ours. What is the divine standard of man's behavior? What is of value and worth while in the sight of God? What is the great commandment in the law of God?

And who can teach us that? Surely the great spiritual Master. No man ever spake, nor will speak, like this man. Christ knows more than we do about God. Who will deny that? Christ knows more than all the preachers, and all the philosophers, and all the magazines, and all the books, about the mind and the will of God,—Christ the manifestation, the speaking revelation, the actual incarnation of God. Even on the lowest ground, the holiest man is always the wisest in spiritual things. Any man ought to know most about that which he studies the most. And knowledge of spiritual things, above all other knowledge, depends upon sympathy of spirit. The pure in heart shall see God: that is one of the essential axioms. To whom shall we go? who else has the words of eternal life save the spiritual Master, the one ideal, pure, perfect saint and hero of all time?

I emphasize that, because the answer which Christ gave to the lawyer's question is not the commonly accepted answer. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul,

and all thy mind." That, he said, is the first and great commandment. But we are inclined to doubt that. Ask any dozen men their real opinion, and we will find that ten of them will hold that the best that man can do is to do right, to live honestly, to help his neighbor, and to do his daily duty. The best of life, in the judgment of a large proportion of the readers of this sermon, is morality rather than religion. It is better that we should love our neighbor than that we should love the Lord God Almighty. One of the best men I know said to me the other day in a letter, "You know that I belong to a family that is more noted for their honesty than for religion, and personally, while not claiming much of the former, I frankly admit to having little or none of the latter." And, evidently, the difference here intended between honesty and religion is that honesty looks toward our fellow-men, while religion looks first of all to God.

Now the most important fact anywhere in the circumference of truth is the fact of the existence of God. The most important being—incalculably the most important—in the whole universe, in the whole range of life, is God. God made us; God set us in our places in the great brotherhood of man; God gave us all that we have of heart, of soul, of mind, of strength; God keeps us in

being; to God we go at the last. No man made himself; and no man has lived long in this world without becoming aware that he is set in the midst of vast, mysterious, uncontrollable forces. Nature is but the garment of God. All motion is but the movement of God. Back of every fact in nature, in history, and in human experience, we come to God. And after death is God. The first step in the argument is the human soul; and that means the divine soul, God; and God must be supreme. Over all, and in all, is God.

Christ said that the most important thought that anybody can think is a thought about God; and that the supreme human duty is our duty toward God. Whoever leaves God out of his reckoning goes adrift inevitably. It is more important, immeasurably, to reverence, to fear, and to love God than it is to tell the truth, and to conduct an honest business, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, or to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. No amount of obedience paid to the last six commandments can make up for any man's neglect of the first four. No amount of devotion to the second of the two commandments of the gospel can take the place of disregard of the first. No man is living a right life, no matter how upright or how honorable,

who lays the emphasis of his endeavors upon honesty, and is contented to let religion go. You may think of your neighbors all day long, and spend your whole time in the effort to be a helper and an uplifter, a bringer of good into the dark places of a bad world; you may be the best of benefactors, the most public-spirited of citizens, the most devoted of all men in your love for your family, perfectly straightforward, immaculately honorable, the soul of virtue, the mirror of all human graces,—but if you leave God out, do not think of God, do not pray to him or worship him, do not love God, you have, after all, left out that element of human life that gives it value. Your life is like a clock without an hour-hand; all that busy ticking simply does not count.

That is a hard saying. But you know the emphasis that is laid in the Bible upon faith. Again and again in various ways we are earnestly assured and warned that without faith it is impossible to please God. And faith—what is faith? Not an acceptance of the statements of the theologians. No; faith finds a good definition in the “great commandment.” That is what it is; to do that—to love God with all the heart and soul and mind. Faith, whatever meaning we attach to it, is pre-eminently concerned with God. That

is perfectly evident. Nobody will say that faith and morality are the same thing. Faith is the heart of religion.

It is, of course, as plain as day that the fruit of faith is all manner of good living. Nobody can possibly believe in God and love God without desiring in everything to please God. And God has left us in no doubt that there is no way in which we can please him better than by keeping his commandments, by doing his will.

And the supreme commandment which follows that which sets our love toward God prompts us to love our neighbor as ourselves. It is, indeed, impossible in the nature of things to love God without loving our neighbor, to have faith without works. The very sign and proof of divine love is human love. No man is a godly man unless he is a good man. So strong is the bond, indeed, between faith and works, between goodness and godliness, that we hope that the fruit is a proof of the planting of the right seed, that the good life indicates a good heart, and that the man who really loves his brother loves his heavenly Father also.

But the difference between the second of the commandments of the gospel and the first lies just in this: that God looks at the heart rather than at the hands, accounts the motive as the part of

the deed which determines its value, and cares supremely for man's love. The distinction between two good deeds which sets one immeasurably above the other in the estimation of God is that one good deed is done for the pleasure of the doer, while the other good deed is done for the pleasure of God. One man did his good deed, never thinking about God at all, leaving God altogether out, as if there were no God. The other did his good deed desiring to please God, because it was the will of God, out of love for God.

That is not hard to understand. Every father and mother knows the difference between an obedience which is meant to please them and an obedience which disregards them altogether. The parent desires the love of the child, wants the heart of the child, measures the value of obedience by the love that lies behind it. And so does God.

That is why the love of God is the subject of the great commandment. Because God, as Jesus Christ revealed him to us, stands in a personal relation to us, a relation of which that between a parent and a child is but a faint symbol; God loves us, every one of us unspeakably. And God wants us to love him. No wonder that without faith it is impossible to please him. God is forever looking out for love. God forever finds a lack in every deed which shows no love. Out of

all that we can give him this he sets highest, that we love him.

Do not think that God has no love for the unloving, that he turns in the least from any man who looks out and not up, and loves his neighbor more than he loves his Father. Do not think that God does not take account of every good thing that he can possibly find in the remotest corner of the most forgetful heart. God knows the whole soul of every man that breathes. God alone can tell—better even than the man himself can—how much real love for him is hidden away in the deeds of a man's life.

But do not think that God will ever care more for a man's money than he does for his motive; that he will ever look at the outside and not at the inside; that he will ever exalt a man's love for his little circle of temporary neighbors above the love which he himself asks of the heart and soul and mind of every man; that he will ever reverse the order of the two great commandments, and set morality in the place of religion.

Wonder of wonders, that God should so love us! What is there in the world more wonderful,—except the faintness of our love for him?

PETER AND JUDAS.

THESE two sentences are set down close together in St. Matthew's record of the first Good Friday: "Peter went out and wept bitterly." "Judas went and hanged himself."

Each of these men had a chapter in his life which contained the story of a black sin. Between the man who betrays his master and the man who denies him there is a difference, but not a very great difference. One is about as bad as the other.

Indeed, there has been more said in the defense of Judas than of Peter. Judas, some people think, made a mistake in judgment. He was in a hurry—could not wait; whatever was going to happen, he wanted it to happen now. The kingdom of heaven was coming, Christ said, coming in its own good time. But in the opinion of Judas it was not coming fast enough. Sometimes it seemed as if it were not coming at all. Day by day the cause of the Prophet of Nazareth seemed

to be losing ground. Judas saw that plainly. It was as incomprehensible to Judas as it was to Christ's unbelieving brethren, that anybody who desired as he did to win the world should not show himself openly to the world. Judas wanted a great spectacular, faith-compelling miracle; and he conceived the idea that if the Master were once set in such a position that a choice was necessary between death and a public declaration of his kingship, there would be enacted such a sign and wonder in the eyes of Jerusalem that all opposition would be silenced and Christ would be set upon the throne of the nation. So he consented to play traitor. So he gave up his Master into the hands of his enemies. And the faith-compelling miracle did not happen, and the decisive word was not spoken, and Judas found that instead of that was shame, and insult, and spitting, and the scourge, and the cross. And he flung down his infamous wages upon the temple pavement, and went and hanged himself.

It is not by any means certain that the apostles defended Judas in this fashion. He betrayed his Master, and he went "to his own place," wherever that was, and beyond that the apostles tell us very little. We can only hope, in charity, that this explanation of that black sin may have some light of truth in it. Anyhow, it is the best that

can be said for Judas. And it is more than can be said for Peter. Peter was afraid. The soldiers got about him in the guard-room with loud, threatening voices, and the man was scared for his life. And he declared with the emphasis of an appeal to God, taking his oath upon it, that he was no disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, had no connection with him nor care for him, and had never so much as looked into his face before that night. And Jesus came out from the presence of his enemies, and heard that speech, heard his own friend, one of the three whom he had taken closest to his heart, cast him out, reject him, and deny him. Pontius Pilate was a better man that day than Peter. Even Judas did not betray his Master to save his own life; had no use for his life further when he learned what his betrayal really meant.

Judas went and hanged himself. That was more than Peter did. Peter went out and wept bitterly, felt very badly about it. But there is a good deal of difference between putting a handkerchief to one's eyes and putting a rope about one's neck. Ought not Peter to have imitated Judas?

The question is, What shall a man do who has committed a great sin? Shall he go out and weep bitterly, and then try to make up for his offense, and be a decent man again? or shall he

go and hang himself? A man can hang himself without a rope. He can imitate Judas without getting buried in a potter's field. He can go hanged through the rest of a long life—that is, he can make himself absolutely miserable, torture his soul, put his conscience in the rack every night, and break his heart on the wheel. He can commit spiritual suicide. Now, which is the best example, the apostle with the tearful eyes or the apostle with the broken neck? The alternative is between hope and despair.

That such a question is not a needless one, nor far removed from the common life of living men, is testified by a letter which came to me the other day; a letter unsigned and undated; the writer of it is wholly unknown to me. The letter asks this question:

“Can one sin”—my correspondent wants to know—“one sin, the result of a fevered and diseased mind, committed by a person whose entire life up to the time of its commitment had been one earnest labor and care for others, and whose life since has been one long, severe struggle to root out the memory and live an earnest life—can this sin be forgiven, so that even in this life some gladness may come? Can an act committed under the above-mentioned circumstances be called a sin? If not, why is there no way in this

world of proving it, so that the life may not be a perfect wreck to the one who has so sinned?"

It seems to me that this is exactly the same question which was in the mind of Peter and of Judas when they came to realize the fearful meaning of betrayal and denial. They had each of them committed a sin no doubt a thousand times greater than the one referred to in this letter. And they said, each of them in the deep of his heart, And now, what shall I do? Is there any pardon for my sin? And one answered, Yes, and the other answered, No. Everybody must see which answer was the right one. Peter found out presently that Christ was most infinitely forgiving; and Peter was a good man and a helpful man and a happy man all the rest of his life. Judas did not wait to find out, did not dare to try to find out, gave up at once in absolute despair, and went and hanged himself.

The question of forgiveness is a question between the soul and God. Whether God will forgive one sin or a hundred sins that a man has done depends partly upon the man and partly upon God.

So far as forgiveness depends upon God, we can judge of God's willingness to forgive by learning about God, about his character, about his disposition toward us. And we can learn

something about that by studying our own hearts, because God made us like himself. The best that is in man is a true revelation of the character of God. The prophet Hosea made a great discovery once about God. Hosea had had the unspeakable misfortune to marry an unworthy wife. His wife left him and went off into all manner of abominable living. At last, one day he came upon her in the most abject poverty, set in the market-place to be sold as a slave. And Hosea bought her and took her home. And when Hosea looked into his heart he found that after all he loved his wife. In spite of years of pain and shame, in spite of all her sin, still Hosea loved his wife. And then it came to him like a revelation out of the sky, that in looking into his own heart he was looking also into the heart of God. For was he better than God? If he loved his sinful wife did not God also love his sinful people?

There is a poem of Robert Browning's—"Saul"—which teaches that same true lesson. Be sure that God's love is more patient and more tender, and God's forgiveness wider and deeper than any man's:

"For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."

We learn still more about God by studying the revelation of him in the life and words of Jesus Christ. Christ taught us that God is our Father. Make that a test of all theology. Nothing is true which contradicts the fatherhood of God. God will never do anything which we cannot reconcile with the wisest and most tender fatherhood. God never thinks one thought about the most abandoned sinner which the ideal father would not think about his wandering boy. The parable of the prodigal son contains the Christian revelation of God.

Christ tells us over and over, in parable and miracle, in prayer and sermon, of the love of God, of the longing of God to have all who have turned away from him turn back, and of the perpetual and instant and abundant welcome which waits upon repentance. Is there not more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance? Did not God so love the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish? Christ's whole mission from Bethlehem to Calvary, what was it but a declaration of God's love for sinners? He came to bind up the broken-hearted, to make hope out of despair, to assure us of the forgiveness of God.

It is true that there are certain classes of per-

sons to whom forgiveness seems to be denied. For example, there are those who refuse to forgive. The measure of God's forgiveness is the width and breadth and depth of our own forgiveness of our neighbors. A man comes, in a parable, who, like the writer of this letter, is burdened with a great debt. He asks that his debt, an enormous sum, may be forgiven him. His master listens and forgives. The case is exactly such a one as is submitted to us, only worse. And the offender is forgiven. Then he goes out and refuses to forgive a little debt which his brother owes him, and the master puts him into prison. It seems as if God were willing to forgive almost any sin except the refusal to forgive.

There are also the self-righteous people, who are not at all worried about their sins, but are disposed, on the contrary, to thank God that they are so particularly good. Against these people Christ said words of strong indignation. Christ was always very tender of sinners who realized their sin, but he found nothing in common with Pharisees and hypocrites. The people who are set off to the left of the great white throne, in the Lord's picture of the Day of Judgment, are those who say, When did I ever do anything wrong? There is never a word of threatening for a man who knows his sin and is sorry for it.

Something ought, perhaps, to be said here about the Unpardonable Sin. There is one sin which is a sin unto death; no use praying for such a sinner; no forgiveness awaiting such a sinner either in this world or in the next. Every conceivable sin may be pardoned and done away with save only this. Now, what is this Unpardonable Sin? It is described as being an offense against the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is God speaking in a man's conscience. Sin against the Holy Ghost is sin committed against a man's own clear knowledge of the difference between good and bad. It is a deliberate, considered, and willing choice of known iniquity. It is the act of a man who calls good evil, and evil good. It is an actual preference of darkness for light.

More than that, it is this sin persisted in and never repented of. For the promise to repentance is absolute and unconditional: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." The man who commits the Unpardonable Sin makes it unpardonable by never seeking pardon. He has no desire for pardon, no regret, no stings of an uneasy conscience. The conscience of the sinner of the Unpardonable Sin is dead. Nobody who has the least longing to escape from sin has fallen into the Unpardonable Sin; for that longing is evidence that the Spirit of God is still persuading

him. The Spirit of God has no longer any word to say to the sinner of the sin without a pardon.

The writer of this letter does not belong to either of these three classes in whose case forgiveness is in doubt. If the man who owed ten thousand talents could be forgiven, if the prodigal son could take his place again in the household, if Peter could be numbered again with the apostles, there is surely no reason for despair.

So far as man's part in forgiveness is concerned, all that God asks is that the man turn back, be sorry, and amend his life. Whosoever does that needs no sign out of the sky to assure him of the pardon of the Father. He is forgiven. All that he needs now is to set that sin resolutely behind him as a part of the dead past, and go on. A good many people are like the rich man's brothers in the parable: they want somebody to come back from the dead, or some other very wonderful and unusual thing to happen, that they may be assured of the truth of the word of God. But God does not grant that sort of wish. God has told us in the person of his Son, and it is written plain in his Holy Word, that he is our loving Father, ready to forgive, forever waiting to be gracious, asking only that we love him and try to do his will.

Every repentant sinner is forgiven. The answer

to the letter is not only that that sin can be forgiven, but that it has been forgiven. If it came out of a diseased mind, God knows that, and sets the boundaries of responsibility, and makes all possible allowance, wider than we make. And though the mind had not been diseased at all, save with the disease of sin, the sorrow afterward, and the amendment, would have brought divine forgiveness. God has forgiven you. That is the end of it.

Follow Peter and not Judas. The best and happiest part of Peter's life was after that sin. So it may be in your life. All stirring up of that old memory, all transferring of that unfortunate past into the living present, I will tell you what it is like: it is like a soldier who has stumbled on the march sitting down and spending the rest of that day lamenting that stumble, instead of going on and fighting better to make up for it. It is like a disobedient child who is sorry afterward and repents, and his father forgives him, and then the child spends a whole week moping and mourning over that forgiven sin. Doesn't that look as if the child doubted the entireness of the father's pardon and the reality of his love? You don't want him to go about day after day with tears in his eyes, do you? Neither does our Father in heaven.

God wants us to remember our past forgiven sins only as reasons for carefulness and as reasons for gratitude. He does not want us to go about with hearts drying up and minds paralyzed, groping in the dark. And if we really believe what God says, we will not do that. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Let us forget what God in his mercy has long since forgiven and forgotten.

SERVING GOD FOR NAUGHT.

“IF God will keep me in the way that I go and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God.”

That was the bargain which Jacob made with God. Jacob was just then running away from the consequences of one over-cunning bargain, and it came to pass as he stopped to say his prayers that the phrases of trade crept in among the phrases of petition. And he tried to make a contract with God. He was like some men who come to church to-day and plan their Monday work in prayer time, and do sums in mental arithmetic during the sermon. Even that is better than to imitate the people of the parable who went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise, another to his leisure at home, another to the accounts at the store, and miss the service altogether.

Jacob was a shrewd and crafty money-maker.

Even religion, he thought, might be made to minister to a man's material advancement. If God would give him bread to eat and raiment to put on, if God would build him a good house and furnish it, if God would give him a fair measure of success in his mercantile adventurings, why, then, for his part, he would be perfectly willing to recite his prayers, and sing his praises, and be on the side of God. So much prosperity, so much praise; so much wealth, so much worship. "Then shall the Lord be my God." It would be a paying bargain. It would be worth while.

That was the idea of God which that Saxon priest of Odin had who listened to the good bishop Paulinus as he preached the promises of the new religion and said: "The old gods have profited me little. These long years have I served them, no man more diligently, and yet many are richer and more prosperous than I am. I will try the new." And thereat he rode full-tilt into Odin's temple, and with his lance tumbled the great statue of the god over into the dust.

That was the idea which men had of God in those days, when the favorite deity among the Romans was that fickle goddess Fortuna. There are no more pathetic and significant relics of that old religion than the little battered and broken altars dedicated to Fortune. "Let us say our

prayers," men said, "to the great god, Good Luck. Let us get him to give us this and that." Toward the end nothing remained of that ancient faith but this—a serving of the gods to ward off evil and to get good.

To-day "the negro of Guinea beats his gods when they do not gratify his wishes, and the New Zealander threatens to kill and eat them." Indeed it was the opinion of the devil in that wonderful play of "Job," that godliness everywhere was merely for the sake of gain. In comes Satan among the sons of God, weary with a long journey. He has been going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it. "And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for naught?"

It was the opinion of the devil that any man will serve God so long as he gets good pay for it. If the Lord gives him bread to eat and raiment to put on, any man will choose the Lord for his God. But let adversity come, and then see! Doth any man serve God for naught?

I am afraid that Jacob's bargain has its parallels in Christian communities. I am afraid that the devil's sneering question must in some in-

stances be answered in the devil's way. The most evident instances are, of course, to be looked for in connection with the great troubles of life. Adversity comes, and it is not every one that meets it as faithfully as Job did. People lose their money, or they lose their health, or they lose their friends; and then because they are poor, or sick, or full of loneliness or sorrow, they lose their faith. They begin to stay away from the sacrament, and to be missed out of their places in church, and presently they are found to say that God does not care for them, and perhaps there is no God at all. If there is a God, why do they suffer? Why does he not send prosperity? What is God for if not to help us? A God who does not serve us, why should we serve him?

That was not what Job said. No doubt there were plenty of imperfections in Job's religion, but at least it was not founded upon selfishness. It was not built upon that shifting sand. It was not constructed out of such materials that it stood up and made a brave show in the sunshine, and toppled over and went to pieces when it rained. Job said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." Jacob said, "If he pay me, then will I trust him." There is some difference!

It is said that in these days the commercial spirit of the time has got into religion; that Jacob

is still bargaining with God; and this not only in the great adversities which try men's souls, but in lesser matters, in some of the ordinary duties of the Christian life. Thus there is a general complaint among the clergy that people nowadays must be paid for everything.

Jacob will give money for Christian uses, he will help the cause of missions, he will assist the poor, he will do his part in building the church and maintaining the parish if you pay him, if you get up a great supper and give him something good to eat, or a concert and let him hear sweet music. Jacob will come to church if he is well paid for coming, if there is a popular preacher and a fine choir. Provide enough "attraction," make the services "taking," "interesting," and not too religious, and Jacob will never miss a meeting.

"If God will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house, then shall the Lord be my God."

But we ought to think a great deal more about what we owe to God than about what God owes to us. The central fact of our religion ought to be the fact of God rather than the fact of self. The sovereignty of God and the smallness of man, the omnipotence of God and the weakness of

man, the inexpressible pre-eminence of God, we ought to think of. It used to be asked of converts in a certain Christian Church if they so set God first that they were even willing, if it were for God's glory, to be forever damned. That is a strong way of putting it. But there is a great truth underlying that grim question nevertheless. It is an essential condition of Christianity to look utterly away from self toward God.

There are, accordingly, two words which we all need to emphasize in our religious life. One word is duty, the other is devotion. There are a great many things which we ought to do, whether they are pleasing to us or not, simply because they are among our duties. I fear that the good word "duty" has not the place which it should have in the vocabulary of modern life. People live in the direction of their inclinations. Whatever good work interests them they do, as long as it interests them. When it gets to be tiresome or unpleasant they put it away like a child. They go where they like, and when they like, and as long as they like, and they take small counsel of that stout imperative "must."

But God expects every Christian to do his duty. Nelson reminded his soldiers that England expected that of every Englishman. Napoleon re-

mind his soldiers, at the battle of the Nile, that from yonder pyramids forty centuries looked down upon them. There are the two motives. Shall we work to give something—to give our allegiance and our lives to the Power that is over us? or shall we work to gain something—to get somebody's good opinion, or to get a gratification of our own pleasure? Shall our offering be a sacrifice or a bargain?

God desires us to do our duty. And one of the characteristics of duty is that it is a thing done out of the sense of obligation. It is our duty, for example, to obey the will of Christ. And that means that we are to do just what he tells us to do, whether we want to or not; obeying not our own inclinations, but his positive commandments. Take, for instance, the matter of forgiveness, upon which he laid such frequent emphasis. When it is easy for us to forgive we are probably not obeying Christ nor doing our duty at all; we are obeying our own selves and doing our own pleasure. When it seems almost impossible to forgive and we forgive, then we are following the Master along the hard path of duty.

Indeed, the test of duty is nearly always the presence of difficulty. When inclination says, "I don't want to do that," and conscience says, "You must," there is a case of duty. Let me

illustrate this by two or three every-day applications.

I would say that it is the duty of all Christian people, who are in health and are not imperatively hindered, to present themselves before God in his house upon every Lord's Day. This is one of the things which man owes to God. When you are tired with your week's work, or the way is long, or the sky is overcast, or the rain falls, then the test comes. You can go to church, and you don't want to go to church, but you ought to go to church. That is the syllogism of duty. Now you will discover whether your attendance is a matter of duty with you or not. When there are empty seats upon a rainy Sunday, one third of those who are absent are infirm in body, the other two thirds are only infirm in duty.

I would say further that it is the duty of every Christian who has time to do some Christian work. This applies to every Christian, but especially to women, because they have the most time. The societies of a parish never enroll all the members of the parish; often the members are but a minority of the congregation. This is partly because some of the people have no time. They are mothers who must take care of their children, or who must do their household work; in their case the call of duty is to stay at home.

But there are also a great many other people in every parish who are never seen helping with the good work because they are deficient in a sense of duty. They are doing what they like, not what they ought.

It is also a universal Christian duty to give not only time but money. And this applies chiefly to the men, because they have most money. But every offering in every congregation discovers a lack of the sense of duty. Whoever sees it and notices what kind of coins compose it, knows that the larger part of it was given simply at haphazard. The plate came by and the giver felt constrained to give something, and he put his hand in his pocket and gave the first small coin which his fingers lighted upon. That was no honest Christian giving. That did not count in God's sight for anything. These men did not say to themselves: Here is this good cause, how much ought I to give? They knew that, if they gave nothing, somebody would notice it. And so they gave, perhaps, a three-cent piece, which looks so like a dime! Ask the treasurer of the church how often people come to him after the day of some special offering and say: "I could not be at church last Sunday; here is my part of the contribution." That is a measure of the sense of duty.

But there is a better word than duty, and that is devotion.

“When ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.” What! Unprofitable servants still, with all our duties done? Yes; for there is a defect in duty. Duty has plenty of conscience, but no heart. The essential characteristic of it, as I said, is obligation. But that is not the ideal kind of service. “I will take the Lord for my God because I want to, because I love him.” That is the ideal way of serving God.

Love is better than obligation. Better than duty is devotion. For it is love which enriches and beautifies and inspires and consecrates devotion, and lifts it high above all the duty-doing in the world. Love drives no bargains. Love knows no measuring of give and take. It is love’s privilege to give. By and by Jacob came to love God; he came to realize his own imperfect service, and God’s great, infinite love and boundless goodness; he came to see that a balancing of divine blessing with human obedience would be the most disastrous thing which could happen to a sinful man.

God is our loving Father. What devotion is too great for us to give him? Christ from his

cross cries, "This have I done for thee." Who shall set a bound, or a measure, or an end to our willingness and eagerness to do whatever thing we can for him?

For all who love God the terms of that old bargain are written over again with a different meaning. Though God lead me along a narrow way, where it is hard to go, and give me of bread and raiment but a scanty measure, and tribulation with it, yet will I serve him; yet will I devote myself to him body and soul, and count no sacrifice precious enough for him; yet will I love him with all the love of my whole heart, and the Lord shall be my God.

TWO STUMBLING-STONES.

THERE are two stumbling-stones which vex the feet of beginners in religion. I would there were no more than two ! The whole way, on both sides of the gate of entrance, is set about, and narrowed, and encumbered with difficulties. Especially at the beginning. By and by, as the habits of the spiritual life are formed, and the soul gets used to facing temptation and climbing obstacles, and the light of heaven shines clearer and nearer along the path, the way grows easier. But it is hard at the beginning. There are questions and problems, and hard lessons and persuasions of the devil. It is with religion as it is with every other habit or knowledge : it is begun with the initiation of difficulty. Anybody who expects to begin religion at the end is going to be disappointed. Whoever waits to start out in the religious life with the wisdom of St. Paul and with the love of St. John will wait a long time. Children begin literature with a primer, not with

Plato; and music, not with Beethoven, but with scales and exercises. And the primer is a great deal harder at the beginning than Plato is after awhile; and the notes which take two fingers are longer in learning than the pages which take ten. The religious life—by which I mean the conscious and definite living of it, beginning with the public confession of Christian allegiance—the religious life begins amid the stumbling-stones.

And of these there are two which lie so close to the beginning that they are even outside the gate, and the beginner in religion comes to them almost before he begins, and sometimes at sight of them turns back and never begins at all. "I am not good enough" is inscribed upon one of these stumbling-stones. "Other people are not good enough" is placarded on the other. Commonly the second of these comes first. The possible disciple is kept back by the un-Christlikeness of Christians.

There is no use denying that some people in the Church are not as good as they ought to be; and the beginner in religion knows these people better than the parish priest does, because he sees them between Sundays and in their working-clothes. The beginner in religion sees a great deal. And very often the little things trouble him more than the big ones. Little falsehoods; little, petty,

mean cheats and over-reachings and dishonesties ; little offenses against perfect reverence and perfect purity ; little infirmities of temper—these he discovers in the life of some church-member every day, and the sight turns him against religion. He mutters “Hypocrisy !” under his breath, and has his opinion of the Christian Church.

All this is emphasized when the outsider is himself personally wronged, defrauded, meanly treated, spoken against, by some insider. He looks out of his window, and one passes by serenely on his way to church who on Friday stole a hundred dollars out of his pocket by some sort of smart theft. There he goes to say his Christian prayers, and to put twenty-five cents out of that hundred dollars into the alms basin, and to partake of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. The looker-on sits down and stays at home.

This, however, is inevitable. Again and again, good, earnest, zealous men have tried to found a Church to which nobody could belong but absolutely perfect saints. They never have succeeded. The sinners have somehow evaded all the examinations and gained membership. The devil has sown tares among the wheat. Judas was a church-member when there were but twelve in the congregation, and the minister was the Lord Christ himself.

It is well that we should all be mindful of the grave responsibilities of Church membership. It is well that we should often consider what sort of lives we ought to live, who do actually, among our acquaintances who are outside the Church, represent to them the Christian religion. We are epistles, known and read by all men. We cannot help it. We are like cities set upon the summit of the hills—we cannot be hid. We shall be held accountable for every soul whom we have kept back out of the Church by our disobedience to our Master. The only dangerous enemy which the Christian religion has is the unworthy Christian. We ought to think often and seriously about these grave responsibilities.

Nevertheless, it is true to-day, and will remain true till Christ's kingdom comes, that the Church is composed of "saints," just as the congregations were at Rome and Corinth—"called to be saints," but not always answering. It must needs be that offenses come—that is inevitable; though woe to the man by whom the offense cometh.

What shall we say, then, to him who declares that he would join the Church if all the members of the Church were saints?

We might say to him that he would very likely be as much out of place in such celestial company as the rest of us would. We might remind him

that the Church is not, and never has been, and never will be, a club for the spiritual aristocracy, into which nobody shall be admitted unless he be attired in all the purple and fine linen of the garments of holiness. That is not what the Church is for at all. The Church is meant for the ragged people too. "The Lord added daily to the Church such as were being saved." Some of them were, no doubt, only at the very beginning of salvation. They had just started in their fight with the devil. Without a doubt he would down them a hundred times before they would get him under their feet finally. But the Lord did not wait for that. All who were "being saved" were let in. The Church is not a soldiers' home for spiritual veterans who have been through all the religious wars and have now no battles more to fight. The Church is called the Church "militant" because it is meant to be an army.

The people in it are supposed to be set against the evil of the world, in their own hearts first. But the Church is not an "ever-victorious" army. Somebody is always getting defeated. But everybody who is on our side, and is willing to help in our crusade against the devil, we will make a recruit of him. The Church is sometimes called our "mother," because she teaches and trains us. But we are dull and refractory pupils,

a good many of us. However, if anybody wants to learn, wants to be trained to resist temptation and to follow righteousness, wants to be instructed in the truths of God, he may come in.

The Church is really not meant for the saints at all.

There will be no Church in heaven such as we have here. St. John came back from his glimpse into that celestial country, and reported that he could discover no church spire through all the length and breadth of it. "I saw no temple there," he said. There is no room in the Church for saints. We have nothing here which we can offer to such high company. Saints have no need of sermons; saints have no need of sacraments. The Church is meant for sinners. If anybody is conscious of unworthiness, sadly aware that the ideal life is very different from his, knows how hard it is to resist evil, and how difficult it is to learn the real truth of God, and feels the need of help, the Church is the place for him.

The best thing to say to the beginner in religion who is met at the outset by the un-Christ-likeness of Christians is that which our Lord said to Peter, when Peter, who was beginning to follow after him, turned about and saw another disciple also following, and asked a question

about him. Our Lord said, "What is that to thee? follow thou me."

If you are tempted to ask questions about other disciples, the Lord asks this question of you: What is that to thee? This one is dishonest, that one is bitter-tongued, these are unworthy, those are un-Christlike. Well, take them for warnings, then.

First of all, remember that God knows their hearts, and is acquainted with their temptations, and is aware of all the efforts which they make or do not make, and hears them at their prayers; and you are quite on the outside. Perhaps you are right in your stern judgment. Perhaps you are as mistaken as other people are mistaken in the hard thoughts they have of you. And then remember that Christ is the real Church, and that he has set his face against all wrong-doing, and, chiefest of all, against wrong-doing which wears a Sunday face, and for a pretense makes long prayers—chiefest and sternest against that. He will take care of all the Pharisees. You need not trouble yourselves about them. "Follow me," he says. "What is that to thee?"

The thing to be decided is whether joining the Church is the best thing or not the best thing that you can do. Whether other people have proved to be good church-members or bad has

really nothing to do with it. If there is any question about joining an army, the question is not decided for any thoughtful man by assuring him that there are great rascals in the ranks. What is the army fighting for? What is the cause which they are contesting or defending? If the cause is a righteous one and ought to win, why, the more bad soldiers there are in the camp, the more need there is of a good soldier, who will do some stout fighting; and though the new recruit should find himself, like the neophyte in Doré's picture, in strange company, that will not deter him.

Are there any bad Christians? Well, then, if you believe that the cause of Christ ought to win in this world, come in and be a good Christian. No good work can be done on any wide scale for the uplifting of men without co-operation, without hearty and whole-souled co-operation. We want the help of every good man and woman in the world.

If there is a question about joining a class for some special study, the question is not decided for any earnest seeker after truth by showing him that several members of the class are lazy and are not learning anything. What is that to him? Can he himself learn anything? Is there an efficient teacher? Is there a helpful lesson?

But "I am not good enough." That is the other stumbling-stone. Let the other people go; they may be bad or good. At least I know myself. I am not good enough to join the Church. No; if the Church is a club of saints. But it is not. The Church is a great association of sinners. Are you not a sinner? The chief difference between the sinners outside the Church and the sinners inside the Church is, that those who are inside confess, by their position, that they want to be helped out of their sin. The others do not say that.

Here is a great crowd of people listening to the message of the apostles, and at the end of the sermon some stay and some go away. Those who stay stay that they may be baptized and admitted into the Church. They are "pricked at the heart"; they are conscious of sin; they want forgiveness and help to do better. Do they stay because they consider themselves better than other people? Do they ask entrance to the Church because they feel that they are good enough? Is there any doubt about the matter? Is it not as plain as the shining sun that the people who considered themselves pretty good people walked serenely away that afternoon, and never thought twice about joining the Church? They were not "pricked at the heart." They heard no accu-

sations from their deaf-and-dumb consciences. They were not conscious of any particular need of spiritual help. They were "good enough." That is just why they did not join the Church, because they were "good enough."

You will never find anybody who is "good enough" joining the Church. It is the people who are bad enough who come into the haven of the Church. It is those who are weary and heavy laden with a burden of sin who seek rest in the Church. It is those who are sadly conscious that they are not approaching their ideal who come for help into the Church.

If you mean, when you say that you are not "good enough" that you have no real desire and longing to live the life which our Lord wants us to live, that is another matter; then you are not good enough, indeed. But if you mean that you are not yet as strong a Christian as you wish to be; if you mean that your love and devotion to Jesus Christ are not so deep and tender as you wish; if you mean that there are a hundred lessons in the Christian life in which you cannot pass a good examination—why, you are beginning at the end. The purpose of the Church is to help you in all this. If you had learned it all, there would be no need for you to join the Church. "Follow me," Christ says. And what

you are to do is just that, day by day, trying always to get a little closer. But do not think that you may not enroll yourself among the followers of Christ until you have come up as close behind him as the apostle Paul. Everybody is a follower of Christ who is trying to follow Christ.

To honestly and earnestly desire to live a Christian life is all that Christ asks at the beginning.

WHY WE OUGHT TO LOVE GOD.

WE ought to love God. It is our duty to love God. We are commanded to love God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." The Old Testament and the New Testament unite in emphasizing that injunction. It is not likely, however, that that text ever persuaded anybody into loving God. Love laughs at injunctions, pays no heed to duty, absolutely cannot be commanded. Obedience can be got that way, but love—never!

It is of the very nature and essence of love that it must grow in a willing heart. Figs will grow on thistles quite as readily as love at the word of law. There is no such thing as love by regulation. Love is the manifestation of an untrammelled choice. If the choice be hindered, unwillingly directed, made under dictation, it is no choice, and the object chosen is not loved.

It may be that God set temptation within the

reach of man that he might thus make it possible for us really to love him. The test of love is preference. Love comes out into the light, and is discovered when there is a choice to be made between two, or for or against. Man, hedged about with imperative innocence, without a chance to choose between God and the devil, compelled to obey God, having no way of showing any voluntary loyalty to God, would never have loved God. God set that forbidden tree in the midst of Eden that man might use his gift of will, and might thus be able to render God a willing service, that is, a loving service. He took away bondage and compulsion when he planted that old tree in Eden. That was a liberty tree. That was the one fact in the world which kept man from being a machine. With that great tree shading his path, man was a man, having the power of choice, a responsible being, the possessor of a free will, and so, able to love God. Every temptation, every opportunity to do wrong from Eden down, has given man a chance to vindicate his manhood, to choose as a man may, and to show God that he loves him. The best way in the whole world for a man to show his love for God is to say "no" to the devil, and to stand up on the side of God.

But we must not do that because we are com-

manded to do it, because we are afraid not to do it, but because we want to do it, if there is to be any real love in it. Love must be the free choice of a willing heart. Love cannot be commanded.

The purpose of the great commandment is not to establish obedience, but to proclaim an ideal. The spirit of it is not that we must love God because we must, but that God wants us to love him. The two supreme commandments of the gospel show us the sort of man that God approves of. They hold up an ideal. They reveal the divine standard of human manhood. The manliest man to be found anywhere in this great family of God is he who loves God with all his heart and soul and mind and strength; and who loves his neighbor as himself.

But if we desire to love God better than we do, we will have to find some other text than that to help us. Take this one: "We love him because he first loved us."

God loves us. Before Christ came, bringing that message from the divine Father, and writing it in the sight of all the world over the arms of that Good Friday cross on Calvary hill, people deemed it too good to be true. In days of prosperity, in the sunshine, in the strength of health, and in the time of content, it was thought that

perhaps it might be true. Up above there somewhere, among the everlasting stars, there might perhaps be a beneficent Creator, a kindly Ruler, possibly a loving Father. But when the sun went down, and darkness came upon the earth, and adversity and accident lay in wait along the path, when pain came and death after it, and all things seemed to be going wrong, almost everybody lost sight of that beautiful dream. It was not true. God did not care. God is not love. The psalmists and the prophets, who had better eyes than other people to see God, somehow kept their faith. But others lost heart—feared God, but did not love him.

The truth is, there is no revelation of the love of God in all the pages of the book of nature; I mean of that side of God's love which touches us as individuals. History teaches plainly enough, most people think, that God cares for the race. God has all these centuries been teaching and bettering the race. He has seemed sometimes to be a stern schoolmaster; he has punished those who would not learn his lessons, with inevitable and unsparing severity, listening to no excuses, never pardoning human ignorance—that is, so far as this world goes; and that is as far as man can see. But it has all been for the best. That is plain enough. We can look back now and see

that. All the plagues and the famines, all the wars and the martyrdoms—we can see their place in the general bettering of human life. The world has all along been growing better. This year is the best year that man ever lived in since the year one. God cares for the race. He is a careful Father, possibly a loving one, at least that far.

That might be an argument for the reality of God's love for you and me. We belong to the race. Our good and evil fortune is inextricably intermingled with the fortunes of the race. Whatever is good for the world at large,—or perhaps I would better say, whatever has been good for the world at large in the past,—helps us. Our brethren, all along, have died that we may live. Over and over, men have gone to death as the Russian soldiers marched into that tragic ditch of Schweidnitz, that those who came behind might pass on over them and win the victory. But how about those poor fellows down there in the ditch? Did God love them when he gave them death in the place of triumph? You and I get into the black shadow of pain, and we look up, and the face of God is hidden from our eyes. It may be that our pain may somehow help our brother, but does not God care more, then, for our brother than he does for us? God is love, St. John tells us.

We love him, St. John says, because he first loved us. But does God love us? Has not God deserted us, lost sight of us, forgotten us, remembering only the great race of man? And we realize the infinity of God; and we remind ourselves that this whole planet is but a grain of dust in the vast, illimitable universe of God. What is man, what is any one individual, that God should be mindful of him? Is not God mindful only of the race? The great God, out among the everlasting stars, must not a vast number of us small creatures be set together before we can be of size enough for him to see?

Of course we have a ready and effectual answer to that last fear of the human heart. God is a spirit, and size of body matters not with him. No amount of material substance can compare in value to a thinking brain. No weight of rock can enter into competition with a soul. The great sun, and all the suns melted together into one vast white-hot furnace of interminable flame are not worth a soul. Wherever God finds a man he finds a being akin to his own self, something indeed divine. Every man is of value, must in the very nature of things be of value, in the eyes of God.

But when we ask if God really loves us, then the book of nature has no satisfying answer, and

the pages of human philosophy have no satisfying answer. "God is love" is not written so that we can be sure of it in any book but one. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us;" that was not spelled out with the alphabet of common experience; a Christian said that, a Christian apostle who had learned from One who was different from all other men, a disciple of the supreme spiritual Master whom the Father himself instructed.

Christ is the only authoritative teacher of the love of God. We know and believe the love that God hath to us, because Christ has taught us.

Christ taught God's love for man in the blessed words that he spoke.

The Christian name for God is Father. God is our Father. That is the one word in which is summed up all that Jesus taught of God. See how it stands in the Christian religion at the very beginning of the Christian Creed, "I believe in God the Father"; and at the very opening of the lips at the beginning of the Christian prayer, "Our Father." Jesus himself said that name so lovingly, with such a singular and memorable tenderness in his tone, that they who heard him speak it never forgot the sound of his blessed voice in the syllables of the Syrian word. And they set it down in the pages of the gospels un-

translated, just as he pronounced it, to come down to us a testimony of that close and confident and filial relation which Jesus held with the Eternal. "Abba" was the word for "father" in the language of that country. It was the name which the little Galilean children learned in their cradles. Abba—father. Jesus looked up to the great God and called him, and taught us to call him, by that loving name.

God is our Father. All that is true of the tenderest and wisest fatherhood is true of God. And nothing is true of him, though it be written in all the theologies, which contradicts that name. God is our own Father. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." That means God's individual knowledge of us. It means God's individual care for each one of us. Christ said—whatever our questioning hearts may say—Christ said for all who are able to believe him, able to trust him, that God does care. Christ answered the universal question. The heavenly Father loves the smallest and obscurest of all his children. Not one out of the whole great number, not even the prodigal, is forgotten of God.

And Christ taught God's love in other ways than in the lesson of his words. He taught it by the lesson of his life.

For the life of Jesus, even more than the words of Jesus, was a revelation of God. We do not need, I think, to go very deep into the profundities of theology to see that. God must be better than any man; that is plain enough. And the better a man is the truer is the revelation which he bears of God, the higher the idea of God which he makes possible in the hearts of men about him. And when you find an ideal man, a man who sets a standard of manhood such as no saint or hero in all history has ever touched, even so much as touched, before his day or since—when you find such a man, such a divine man, is he not a revelation, and the truest of all revelations, of the Most High God? The highest truth that has ever been reached, or discovered, or dreamed of about God is that God is like Christ. And that truth must be true. Henceforward, it becomes impossible for one who honestly and intelligently thinks about it to believe anything less than that. God is like Christ. And every child knows how Christ was the supreme incarnation of love. To love men as Christ loved them has ever since been the unrealized dream of every Christian benefactor. How patient he was with the ignorant, how generous in making all allowance for the sinner, how full of sympathy with all sorrow, how he went about doing good and

trying in all manner of ways to get more love into this unbrotherly world—all this is written in the plain pages of the Christian gospel. Christ gave us a better rule for loving our brothers than that second commandment. He said that we should love others as he loved us. That touches the supremest possibility of human affection.

The Father does seem sometimes a long way off, and very great, and incorporeal, and invisible, and almost impersonal; and so, perhaps, hard to love. But it is not hard to love Christ. How can anybody help loving Christ? And whoever loves Christ loves God. Whoever has seen Christ and known Christ has seen and known the Father. Christ is the very closest we can possibly get to God.

Finally, Christ taught the love of God for us not only in the life he lived, but in the death that he died.

God is our Father, and our Father loves us; and God is like Christ, and so God loves us. But that old question comes back sometimes in spite of that,—that old question about the possibility of any union between love and pain. Pain comes, and we begin to doubt. Then the cross teaches its wonderful lesson of strength and comfort. For here is Christ, whom the Father loves supremely, set in the midst of sorrow. His friends

have forsaken him ; his enemies, who hate him without a cause, crowd in about him ; he has experience of suffering, the shadow of death falls about him ; and the sky is black above him. If pain means that God forgets, then God has forgotten. Yet out of all these depths of anguish, out of all this blackness of desolation, he who knows God best of all who ever breathed looks up into his Father's face, and calls him Father.

We wonder if pain and love can really go together, and behold ! here they are together at the cross of Jesus. He whom God loves suffers ; love unspeakable, suffering unspeakable. Henceforth let no sorrowing soul fear that God has forgotten. The Father never forgets. The Father loves eternally.

He wants us never to forget him. He who loves us asks our love, because he loves us. We love him because he first loved us.

THE SICK OF THE PALSY.

IN a large upper room, such as they have in the houses of the East, the Master is teaching, and outside the house and street are thronged with listeners. Suddenly there is a noise of hurrying feet, and down the road come five men, one lying on a bed and four carrying him, all with their eyes turned toward this house. They want to get where Christ is. But the street is crowded. There is no way of getting near even to the door. What shall they do? Why, here is the outside stairway, leading to the roof. Up this hurry the four, bearing their precious burden. The listeners in the upper room hear the sound of the trampling feet. Then there is a noise of pounding and pulling and beating; dust and chips begin to fall upon the heads of the crowded congregation. And presently there is a great hole in the ceiling, and down comes the sick man through the hole, lying in his bed, the four letting him down, one at each corner, until he lies at the feet of Christ.

The coming of these men in search of Christ showed a good deal of faith. But that they should have climbed upon the roof and made a hole in the ceiling, and let the sick man through—this showed that these five men were very much in earnest, and that their faith was genuine.

Because the crowd was a test. How strong, now, is the desire of these five to come into Christ's presence? The hindrance will show that. Half-heartedness would have taken the crowd for a good excuse, and would have turned back. But genuine earnestness looks about, as these men did, for some way to climb over hindrances, and to turn stumbling-blocks into stepping-stones. All hindrances are tests. They try the reality of our resolutions and the genuineness of our purposes. A black sky of a Sunday morning tests the strength of a Christian. Those who are physically or morally weak stay at home. This is but a homely illustration of one of the constant truths of human life. God is every day testing us, and in every way. He himself knows us; he has no need for himself to test us. But we do not any of us know ourselves perfectly well. And the tests which come with hindrances bring us revelations of ourselves.

We all imagine that we are patient and forgiving and honest and faithful until we are tested.

After that, imagination is translated into knowledge. That is one of the blessings which God sends with every difficulty and grief and trial. Every day we are tested. And the tests dispel delusions. We come to see ourselves as we are. We discover where we are weak. And thus we find out where we need to fortify ourselves and to get strong.

The test of hindrance came in the way of these men, and at once they showed how strong was their desire to get into Christ's presence. At first it seemed impossible for them to get where Christ was. But it was not impossible, there was a way. And that way they found.

It is always possible to get near to Christ. There is no kind of hindrance which so stands between Christ and the soul that the soul cannot break through and touch Christ. Down through the broken ceiling comes the sick man into the presence of Christ.

And then that happened which came to pass a thousand times during the life of Christ: he looked down at the sick man at his feet, who lay there wondering, no doubt, and anxious as to what the Master might have to say to such an interruption in his sermon. He looked down, and the light came into his face, and he gave his welcome. "Son, be of good cheer," he said.

For while it is blessedly true that an approach to Christ is possible in spite of every hindrance to every soul that earnestly seeks him, it is also true that Christ has a welcome for every soul. Whoever comes to him he will in no wise cast out. Because Christ changes not. What he was in Galilee he is still, unchangeably. Whoever brings a grief to him to-day Christ sees and hears as he did in that upper room in Peter's house, and answers and blesses still.

Presently he spoke again to the paralytic, and said, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." His prayer was answered.

That is the story of the miracle with a good deal left out, with the most important part left out. Thus far it is like many another miracle, except that the man who was healed was somewhat more persistent than usual. But Christ did much more for the paralytic than to cure his sickness: he forgave his sins.

Indeed, the absolution came before the miracle. And the miracle followed as a quite subordinate matter,—as a piece of evidence. Christ worked the miracle as a proof of the absolution. "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise."

That must have surprised the paralytic. He

had gone to Christ as men go to a physician. He was afflicted with the palsy and he wanted to get relief from it. He had heard that Christ had been effecting some remarkable cures. He believed that Christ could cure him. So far as we know, this man had come to Peter's house with no more thought of religion than we have when we consult a doctor. And the first words which proceed from the Physician's lips are these remarkable ones: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

The blessings of God do not always come as we ask or think. Sometimes people imagine that prayer is not answered, because it is not answered in their way. Sometimes people come to think that there are no rewards in the service of God, because God does not reward them with the blessings which they expect or desire. They meet hindrances and overcome them; and then they enter with their petitions into Christ's presence; and Christ surprises them as he surprised the paralytic. He gives them a blessing which they have not asked for.

I read here in Christ's absolution of the paralytic a lesson about the rewards of God. The best rewards of God are spiritual. The greatest thing which Christ could do for this paralytic was to forgive his sins. If he had sent him away then,

still on his bed and borne by four, and left him to be afflicted by palsy to the end of his days, he would still have bestowed upon him the richest of all blessings, and he would have denied him only a lower and inferior reward, which, beside the other, was simply nothing. The soul is better than the body. Holiness is better than health. Character cannot be balanced by any equivalent of worldly prosperity.

The trouble is that some people forget that. They serve God, and they think that they ought to be rewarded with money. They do their Christian duty, and they think that they ought to be free from doctors' bills. But that is not God's way. It is not promised to the pure in heart that they shall live in brown-stone houses, but that they shall see God. That is their reward. That is the best of all possible rewards—to be forgiven, to grow in grace, to have the approbation of God. What is there in this world to be desired better than that?

It was but a small thing in the estimation of Christ that this man's body should be afflicted with palsy. But that his soul should be afflicted with sin—that was a serious matter. The Gospels leave unsaid a great many things which we should like to know. How came it that this man, who from first to last uttered not a word, had his sins

forgiven? What had he done to make Christ say that? There is nothing here to indicate that the man had any feeling of repentance, nor even of religion. That we have to put in ourselves. We know, at least, that the man had faith enough to bring him to the feet of Christ. And we know that Christ forgave his sins.

Whether the paralytic was surprised or not we do not know. There is no record of it. But the scribes were surprised. The scribes sat in that upper room where they had been listening to the Prophet of Galilee, and when they heard him say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," they were both surprised and shocked. "Behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth." Who can forgive sins, they thought within their hearts, but God only? Christ met this question with a plain assertion. "The Son of man," he said, "hath power on earth to forgive sins." This assertion he further emphasized by healing the paralytic's body. And then he left them to draw what inferences they might.

God does not force his truth upon the minds of men. He might have written it across the sky; he might have taken away the clouds of the sunset and hung illuminated texts in place of them; he might have had the thunder chant the Nicene Creed. Not so has God dealt with us. There is

no truth in all the teachings of theology which God has made so plain but that a man may miss it. There is no doctrine that can be set beside the proposition that two and two make four, and we can say, Here are two axioms; one is as evident as the other. There is no problem in divinity which can be proved as a problem in arithmetic can. This is partly on account of the nature of theological truth; it is beyond the limits of measurement by foot-rule. It is like human love: it cannot be weighed in balances, nor tested by chemicals. This is partly, also, on account of the nature of the human mind. God, who has given us minds, means us to use them. God sets certain facts before us, as was done here in this room in Peter's house where the scribes were, and then he leaves us to make out what the facts mean.

“The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.”

There are two great truths which Christ came especially to emphasize among us: that we need forgiveness and that we may be forgiven.

The value of the second of these truths rests, of course, upon the first. For unless we need forgiveness, it matters little whether forgiveness is possible or not. I am afraid that the need of forgiveness is not always felt as we ought to feel it. Somehow in these days we are inclined to

emphasize what we may, perhaps, call the good-nature of God. We ourselves look, for the most part, leniently upon sin. The consciousness of our own weakness impels us to make allowances. Sin is a great misfortune. Sin always means loss to the sinner. God is our loving and compassionate Father. Surely he will not be very hard upon his erring children. That is a common way of regarding sin to-day. And it takes rather for granted that forgiveness is so easy that God, looking upon sin and knowing the strength of temptation, forgives men without their asking. This attitude toward sin, this unformulated theory of forgiveness, is due to the excessive preaching of the wrath of God which prevailed a generation or two ago. This is being followed by a season of reaction. There are no "brimstone corners" in these days. Sermons are preached no longer upon "sinners in the hands of an angry God" so that the mouth of hell seems open beside men's feet. And that is well.

Nevertheless, there is a truth which is taught as plainly in the Holy Scriptures as the truth of God's love, and that is the truth of God's wrath. We think of Christ so often as the teacher of the love of God that we forget sometimes that he said anything about the wrath of God. But he did. There are not anywhere in the two Testaments

plainer and truer words about the attitude of God toward human sin, and about the certain and fearful punishment which will inevitably overtake the impenitent, than proceeded from the lips of Christ.

Sometimes some sin shows a little more clearly than usual how hard the heart of man can be; sometimes, perhaps, one dear to us is touched by it, and we are filled with strong indignation. We feel for a moment that unless there is such a fact as hell somewhere in the plan of God something is very wrong about it; and we begin to understand then just how God feels toward all sin, toward the sin which he sees, and perhaps no one else sees, within your heart and mine. Why, so fearful is the sinfulness of sin, and so unspeakably urgent is the need that somehow we be forgiven for it, that the cross was set up and Christ died upon it. Christ died because the destiny of the soul depends upon whether it can get forgiveness for its sin. God does love us infinitely. But God hates sin infinitely. We are all touched by sin. We all need God's forgiveness.

And when Christ said, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," he taught that the forgiveness of sin is possible. In one sense it is not possible. There is no forgiveness which can make the sinner exactly as he would have

been if he had not done the sin, because sin degrades the soul. Every sin carries the soul farther from God. Every sin makes it just so much harder for the soul to appreciate spiritual things, to enter into the joy of God. Forgiveness does not mean that the sinner is made, in relation to his own soul, as if he had never sinned. He must still pay one penalty for sin, the penalty of the spiritual loss which every sin entails. Though even this may be turned into blessing. The man by struggle against sin may gain a strength which, without that struggle, he could never have. Even sin may be transmuted into blessing. But this is what forgiveness means: it means that the sinner is made, in relation to God, as if he had never sinned. It means that the barrier which sin sets up between the soul of man and the love of God is thrown down. Forgiveness means that our sin is so put away that God, who hates sin, nevertheless loves us. This Christ has made possible. We may be forgiven.

"Thy sins be forgiven thee," he said more than once to penitent sinners while he lived among us. "This is my blood which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins," he said the night before the cross. Go teach men that their sins may be forgiven, preach the remission of sins, he said to his apostles, when, after his resurrection,

he sent them out to teach his truth to men. That by the sacrifice of Christ's death we have forgiveness is the very central truth of the whole gospel. Explain it as we may, construct about it whatever doctrine or theory we please, here is the truth. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

THE CONSOLATION OF RELIGION.

THE subject is the consolation of religion. A wise man wrote a book once about the consolations of philosophy. No doubt he discovered a great many philosophical consolations. One of the difficulties, however, about that sort of consolation is that one must be a philosopher to appreciate it. Philosophy is for the wise.

The old philosophers, the Epicureans and the Stoics, whom St. Paul met at Athens, taught an immense deal of truth; and the truth they taught was exceedingly helpful and uplifting. Put the best teachings of those two philosophers together and you get a very fair imitation of Christianity. But the Epicureans and the Stoics never got much influence over the people. They lived in the most irreligious and immoral era of all history, and included nearly all the good men of their day, and they were always trying, as we say, to "reach the masses." But they never succeeded. With all their truth and all their goodness, the world

around them still went on believing lies and following the devil, absolutely uninfluenced.

These philosophies were of necessity reserved for the educated and the cultured. They were like the substitutes which some excellent people propose to-day to take the place of religion—elevated, ethical, altruistic, spiritual, but essentially philosophical; and therefore unpersuasive and, indeed, incomprehensible, except to people of a philosophical turn of mind; having no understandable message to the common people, who, after all, make up a considerable majority of the inhabitants of this planet. These schemes—positivism, secularism, ethical culture, and that sort of thing—are most excellent, and indeed Christian, so far as they go, but the immense difference between Christianity and any sort of philosophy is that Christianity has something to say, and is able to say it to every man, woman, and child, learned or unlearned, the world over. It is not only the philosophers that need consolation. The “consolations of philosophy” are not enough.

Philosophy, indeed, is able to console the philosophers only when they stand in no great need of consolation. Philosophy is an excellent religion for cultured people—in fair weather.

When the skies shine and business is prosperous, and there is money in the bank, and home is

pleasant and books are friendly, and nobody is sick, and no sense of sin darkens the past or the future—why, then, if one is philosophically inclined, and “up” to that sort of interesting speculation, philosophy may, perhaps, give all the consolation that is needed. Philosophy, that is, is an admirable consolation when there is no sorrow.

But let the skies be overcast; let trouble follow trouble in funereal procession along the way of life; let discouragement, and doubt, and discord, and doctors’ bills, and death come in to take away all delight and desire of living; let the sense of sin and the necessity of salvation get hold upon the conscience, and where are the consolations of philosophy? What can the philosopher say beside the sick-bed and the death-bed? The only thing I know that he can say out of his honest heart is that cry which Pliny uttered in the midst of his bitter bereavement—Pliny himself a philosopher of the philosophers—“Oh, for some strong and abiding consolation!” In the presence of the real sorrows of life, in the face of death, in the sight of sin, philosophy is simply dumb. There is no strong and abiding consolation in philosophy even for philosophers.

Philosophy is all down here on the earth. There is no voice in it speaking out of the sky. It has nothing to say to us about God, or about

the life beyond the grave. Its teaching is entirely ethical; its concern is with daily conduct. That sort of teaching is immensely important, and that concern ought to be the chief concern—and was in Christ's day—of the Christian religion. But you have got to have something more than that in a life which has death at the end of it and the mystery of pain all through it.

Somebody said to me the other day that he could very readily accept the ethics of Christianity, and if there were nothing but ethics in it he would very gladly become a member of the Christian Church. But a simply ethical Christianity would have no answer to the profoundest questions of human life, except "I know not." It would have to stand here among the ills and pains and sins and funerals with dumb lips. It would be like philosophy, offering no consolation. It is the peculiar blessing of religion that it is able to wipe away men's tears.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people" is the errand on which the ministers of the Christian Church are sent. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden" is the gracious invitation which they bring. "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying,

Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself . . . shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away."

It is worth while to read that amid the prophecies of the millennium, which are just now so plentiful. It is somewhat different from most of them. What St. John saw was not what Edward Belamy nor William Morris saw. But it is the Christian vision of the twentieth century. It is a look into a land of universal consolation.

Consider the Christian revelation of divine love.

The Christian religion teaches us that God is our Father, and that he loves us more than the tenderest of human fathers loves his children. The central symbol of Christianity is the cross of Calvary. And one of the blessed revelations of that cross is the truth that human pain and divine love can go together. God loved Christ unspeakably. Christ was the "only begotten Son of God," whose giving to take away our sins was the supreme assurance of God's love for us. And yet Christ suffered. All through life he went poor, of humble station, accustomed to hardship, having no place to lay his head, unpopular, subject to in-

sult, acquainted with weariness, having intimate knowledge of disappointment and ingratitude and injustice, finally enduring the shame and agony of crucifixion.

God loved him, and yet all this was in life. And when we see that and have such ills in our lives, we know that the pain is not a contradiction of the fatherhood of God. God's own Son suffered as we do, and worse. It is not likely that we will ever understand with our human understanding the mystery of pain. It will always remain, like the mystery of life, one of the unanswerable problems. Why, in this case and in that, in your case and in mine, things happen as they do, nobody can adequately say.

But this, at least, we want to know about it—is there an angry tyrant or a loving Father over us? And philosophy cannot tell us. When prosperity attends us it looks as if God loves us; when adversity befalls us it looks as if God hates us. Which is the truth? That is the question which the Christian religion unhesitatingly answers.

The Father himself loveth you. The very hairs of your head are all numbered. In the world ye shall have tribulation; the disciple shall be as his Master; and yet, peace I leave with you, let not your heart be troubled. Come unto me and learn of me, he said who came from God to tell us what

God is. "God is love," said he whom the Master taught. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" asks another disciple; "shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" And he answers his own question: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The disciple who said that knew the consolation of religion.

Consider also the Christian revelation of the life to come.

Everybody knows what a consolation there is in hope. We are saved by hope, St. Paul says. All the doctors know how true that is. And all the rest of us know, too, how hope brings strength, makes endurance possible, and, taking tired travelers by the hand, leads them to the end of their journey. The task does not seem so hard if there is a reward worth working for at the end of it. The pain is not quite so bitter under the surgeon's knife if health seems likely to come after it. No ill condition is quite unbearable if it is tempered with hope. Hope is a universal consolation.

Human life is so lamentably out of balance, full of injustice, people so seldom get their full deserts of good or ill, the world is such a disordered tangle, that another world seems a logical necessity. Or else God puts us to intellectual and spiritual confusion. A life to come is the best explanation we can think of for a thousand strange conditions. The truth of the very central assertion of all religion, the truth of the existence of God, seems to demand, if we may so say, for the justification of God himself that there be a world beyond the grave.

Otherwise God is not love, cares not whether we serve him or curse him, distributes benedictions and maledictions without regard to character, suffers the saint to go miserable and the sinner to go happy into a common grave, sets Cæsar on a throne and Christ on a cross, and answers the defiance of one and the love and faith of the other with the same answer—the answer of impartial and unending death.

Even philosophy has guessed at hope. But we know. "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." There shall sin meet its merited punishment, and love be rewarded with love, and all the tangles be straightened out at last, all wrongs made right, ideal justice done

in the kingdom of heaven, in the city of God. Look with hope into the blessed future, O soul oppressed with the world's injustice, smitten with disappointment, misunderstood, borne down with pain of body, laden with care, stricken with the separation of bereavement. Only wait, and there shall be an end and a beginning. Trust God and he will bring it to pass.

The dead are not dead. Death is but the lifting of the veil which hangs between us and the larger life. By and by there is a meeting again, and no separation after that forever. For those who have served God there will be no crying in that other country. Only keep heart and work on in the midst of tribulation. "I will come again and receive you unto myself," he said in whom we put our hope. And that will be the beginning of life and joy eternal.

If the consolation of the love of God and the consolation of the hope of a life to come are ever imperatively needed both together, it is in the case of one who has his eyes open to the fact of sin. A quick, impulsive, unexpected passion sweeps away the reason of a man, and down he falls into some black, shameful sin. He has encountered disgrace. At the least, he has come into that pitiable state in which he is despised by his own conscience. He has often said, following

the service book, that he was a miserable sinner. Now he knows it. And what has a miserable sinner to do with a righteous God? What part or lot has he in any future happiness of the saints? The man is lost.

That is something quite different from losing money. This man has lost his soul. Where now shall he look for consolation? Never man needed it more. Will philosophy console him? You know what sort of consolation philosophy gives in such a case. Philosophy says, You are a fool. You have sown and you shall reap. There is no love, no hope, no reconciliation with God, no offer of forgiveness, in any of the ethical philosophies. They are all intended for well-behaved people.

That, however, is an extreme case. The majority of people do not lie—a great deal, nor steal—a great deal, nor drink—a great deal, nor offend God in any way. They do not get away down into the depths. But it happens sometimes in the life of everybody who learns the real meaning of religion that there dawns upon the soul a great, strong consciousness of sin. The ideal life is set before a man; thus and thus must he live whom God loves; and the man looks at himself. And he sees sin. He sees that by temperament, by natural disposition—that is, by nature—he is un-devout, unprayerful, careless of spiritual things,

selfish, far removed, very far removed, from the kind of life that God loves. And he reads how without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and he realizes that in him dwelleth no good thing. And death is coming, and judgment after it, and this man must stand before the righteous God; and what shall he say? "Miserable man that I am," he cries, as a better man than he cried before him, "who shall deliver me from this dead body?"—from this perpetually besetting sin? And has philosophy any answer to make here, any way of converting this man, of giving him a new heart and a new hope, of bringing him nearer to God, and setting him at peace? There is no such word in all the philosophies as pardon, no such fact as atonement, no taking away of the sins of the world. "O Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us!" That is the only prayer which has pardon and peace for an answer. There is no consolation for the sinner except the consolation of religion.

People think sometimes that they can get along without religion. Philosophy is just as good, and even better. So long as there are lecture-rooms and music-halls and court-houses there is no great need of churches. Books and the reviews will take the place of sermons.

But there comes an hour in every human life

when there is a sudden end to all illusion and the soul looks straight into reality. Out from the depths of some great darkness of pain, of death, of sin, the soul cries for consolation, prays for light. What a man wants then is to know if there is a Father in heaven or not, a meeting again after death or not, a Saviour from sin or not.

He doesn't want any guess about it; he doesn't want any philosophical speculation or conjecture about it; he wants somebody who knows to tell him, so that he can know. And just that is Christ's message, and the Church's mission. That is the consolation of religion.

THE PROVING OF PHILIP.

“WHEN Jesus then lifted up his eyes and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.”

There does not seem to have been anything extraordinary about the apostle Philip. He was a plain man like the rest of us. Indeed, all the apostles were plain men, about whom nothing is, perhaps, more notable than the fact that they were not notable at all. Christ passed over the more conspicuous men of his day and chose these twelve out of the people, twelve plain men. So much the better examples are they for us.

There was not one uncommon man among them. They were not even uncommonly good, but had their defects, and their littlenesses, and

their shortcomings, and their sins, as we have. We put a title before their names, and call them Saint Peter, and Saint John, and Saint Philip; but that is only to distinguish them from any other Peter, and Philip, and John, so that everybody may know whom we mean. We must not let that title deceive us into thinking that they were really different from us. They were plain people just as we are.

And Christ chose these twelve men, who were no scholars, and had no money to speak of, and were none of them particularly distinguished citizens of the towns in which they lived—Christ chose these men who were no better than we are to be his companions and to take up and carry on his work. These plain men turned the world upside down. So can anybody who loves Christ as they did, and believes the supreme truth with the unspeakable confidence which they had, and is dead in earnest, as they were. Indeed, nobody who lacks these qualities can do any great service for Christ in this world, while whoever possesses them cannot help helping.

The text is the record of the Proving of Philip; and I want to emphasize this fact, that Philip was the same sort of man that we are, so that we will realize how closely this proving of Philip touches us.

The character of Philip is indicated clearly in the gospel history. He was the man who, being called by Christ, straightway went and found somebody else. "Philip findeth Nathanael." But when Nathanael has an objection to make to Philip's claim for his Master, all that Philip can say is, "Come and see." He was not good at arguing. It was Philip, also, to whom in Holy Week came certain Greeks, attracted very likely by his Greek name, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." But Philip hesitates to bring them into the Master's presence. He is not quite sure what he ought to do. He consults Andrew. And the two together bring the request to Jesus.

There were two kinds of people to whom Philip found it hard to speak. To the objector, to the inquirer, he knew what to say. Of course the time came when Philip's whole time was taken up with meeting objectors and inquirers. Whoever asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" whoever came saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus," that was the very person whom Philip wanted to get by the hand. But here we find him hesitating, not knowing what to say, behaving just as nine tenths, perhaps, of the Christian people whom we know would behave under similar circumstances.

It was Philip also who upon one occasion made a remarkable request, and upon another occasion

returned a remarkable answer. "Lord," he said, "show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Could any wish be more extraordinary! "Show us the Father!" What did he think would happen? Would the roof open, and the sky part above it, and the invisible be made visible? Would the little company fall into a trance and be transported to the third heaven, there to behold sights indescribable? What was Philip thinking of? And yet was the desire so very far out of the common? Is it impossible that you or I should have uttered a request so unheard of, so preposterous, so astounding? Why, some of us are wishing Philip's wish almost every day. If we could but see God with our eyes, and touch him with our hands, and hear his voice speaking to us in the English tongue, we could believe. How many people there are who have a thought like that deep in their hearts! "Show us the Father," they are saying to religion, "and it sufficeth us."

The remarkable answer which Philip made, and to which I have alluded, brings us to the incident in his life which I have chosen for our special study. After a season of unusually wearying work, Christ and the apostles had gone by boat across the lake of Galilee, seeking a place of rest. It was a desert country across the lake, and is a desert country still to-day. No villages clustered

along the shore, with crowds of fishing-boats putting out into the deep for a draught, as on the western side. It was a solitude. It was an ideal harbor of rest. The work of ministering to men's souls and bodies had so increased upon their little company of helpers, that they had not time, no, not even to eat. They needed rest.

But a great company of people, who felt the need of help just as much as Christ and the apostles felt the need of rest, had gone by land around the head of the lake, and taken sudden possession of this country. And when Christ came there were thousands of them. The solitude was crowded. Rest was not to be thought of. Then it was that Christ proved Philip. For it is written, "When Jesus then lifted up his eyes and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this he said to prove him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." This was an eminently practical answer. Philip evidently was a practical man. He was acquainted with the cost of things. He knew how much money the apostolic brotherhood had in their scanty treasury. He decided at once that this generous thought of Christ's could not

be executed. It would take too much money. Philip was a man who had some idea of money. What he would have said to St. Theresa's project, who started out, you remember, to build a hospital having two halfpence in her pocket, and saying, "Two halfpence with God can build a city"—what Philip would have said to that sort of financiering, we cannot say. At any rate there is no mention of God here. The bread will cost so much money. We have not that amount of money; the plan cannot be carried out.

Now, before we go any farther, let us also do a sum in addition. Let us add up what we know about Philip. We found before that he was a good man who had but little to say on the subject of religion. And we found in his remarkable request, and find now again in his remarkable answer, that he was a man who took the world very practically. He wanted to see what he was expected to believe; and when it was a question of feeding hungry people, his mind turned far more naturally to money than it did to miracle.

Altogether, Philip of Bethsaida was a man whom we all recognize as having his counterparts among us. The apostle who stood beside the shore of the lake of Galilee would not have found himself in a strange world with which he could have had no sympathy, if he could have been

transported nineteen hundred years into the future and more than nineteen hundred miles into the West, and have sat down upon the banks of either the Allegheny or the Monongahela rivers.

This man Christ proved. Christ is forever proving—that is, testing—men. Christ does not need to prove men for his sake. That is, of course, evident. “He himself knew what he would do.” And he knew also just as surely what Philip would do. The proving was for Philip’s sake. The proving is for our sake. We are all ignorant about ourselves. As the years go by we grow wiser about ourselves; we get to realize some of the unknown possibilities of good and bad that are in us. And these lessons we learn by God’s proving us. God teaches us what we are by putting us to the test. We start out, most of us, with the idea that we can accomplish anything. Youth sees no barriers. Step by step, this hard task presenting itself, this temptation meeting us, this opportunity opening for us if we are strong enough to take it, this and that load to lift, this and that battle to fight—these disclose us to ourselves. We learn where the limits are. This is God’s proving.

And the man who is wise and in earnest and has had the courage to set a high ideal before

him, welcomes even the failures which follow these testings of God, because they show him what he needs. Here he must be on his guard; there he must increase his diligence. Every honest man ought to desire to know the truth about himself. That is the only path to any kind of worthy success. And along this path God guides us by his provings. Philip, no doubt, discovered more about himself by his answer to Christ's proving question than he had learned from all the sermons he had ever heard.

But what was the defect in Philip's answer? It was a perfectly true answer; it was eminently reasonable, matter-of-fact, and practical. It was the answer which any sensible man acquainted with the cost of bread and the value of money might naturally give to such a question. And yet Philip of Bethsaida failed. But why and where? What was the defect in Philip's answer?

I would say that one defect in Philip's answer was that it was a hasty answer. He spoke at once, taking no time for thought. Perhaps if he had considered a little he might have answered differently. Certainly, if he could have known, as we who read the story know, that Christ was saying that to prove him, he would have bethought himself and met the test a little better. It would be well if we could all remember what Philip failed

to remember—that Christ is all the time proving us.

The consciousness of being tested puts us on our mettle. Here is a heavy load to carry. Now we shall see how strong you are. Here is a hard provocation straight in your face. Now we shall see what command you have over your temper. Here is one coming to you, as the Greeks came to Philip, saying after a fashion, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Now we shall see what sort of sight of Jesus you have yourself. For no man can give to another what he has not himself. Here is another, objecting to you as Nathanael objected to Philip, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Is your religion which you offer to us true? Can we not say this and that about it?" Now we shall see what kind of Christian you are. What will you answer? Here is a call to duty, and on the other side, summoning in an opposite direction, is a call to pleasure or to rest. Now we shall see what spirit you are of.

In a thousand ways we are being forever put to the proof, and if we could remember that, and not forget as Philip forgot, it would be better for us. The consciousness of the proving would strengthen us to stand it.

Philip ought to have known better than to have made that quick decision that the whole matter

was impossible. Whatever Christ proposes is forever possible. When we look out, as we do to-day at the needs of men, and behold the great hungry multitude of the poor, and compare the world in which we live with that kingdom of Christ which he promised, and for which we pray, we have no right to pronounce a verdict of impossibility. All that is best is possible, because God is behind it.

But Philip, even after taking time, still made a failure of it. It appears to have been early in the day that this conversation took place. By and by the hour came when something must be done. The people must be fed or not. In the meantime the apostles seem to have been talking the matter over. Philip had gone to the others and repeated the Master's question and his own answer, and the whole company had deliberately decided that that was the best answer that could be given.

For it is written : "And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed : send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread : for they have nothing to eat. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?"

This appears to have been the carefully considered conclusion of the united wisdom of all the twelve apostles.

There was, accordingly, another defect in Philip's answer beside the defect of haste—it was a self-sufficient answer. When Jesus proposed that generous plan, and Philip could see no way of carrying it out, the disciple ought to have turned to the Master and answered, "Lord, thou knowest." Instead of that, he endeavored to puzzle the matter out in his own mind. And then the whole twelve tried the same experiment. They also tried to figure out the problem; and when they failed to get a satisfactory answer they contentedly considered the matter settled. They could find no answer; therefore there was none, except a negative, and that they fixed upon. It was as if a company of people should dispute beside an unopened geography as to whether Ceylon is an island or a peninsula. It does not seem to have occurred to Philip and the others to ask the Master.

Christ's proving comes sometimes to-day in the shape of some difficulty of belief; and there are not lacking good, practical, matter-of-fact, and otherwise sensible people who return the same self-sufficient answer. They take the question, and they turn it over and over in their minds.

Commonly the problem, like Philip's, turns upon the difficulty of making two seemingly irreconcilable things go together. Philip could not understand how a scanty purse and a great supper could be set in balance. We cannot understand how the free will of man and the infinity of God can exist at the same time, nor how the presence of pain and sin in the world can be harmonized with the existence of an all-good and all-powerful God, nor how death can at once be an end and a beginning.

What shall we do, then? Shall we follow Philip and say that, since we cannot understand, therefore there is no solution? Shall we maintain that the limit of our thinking is also the limit of all divine possibility?

Or shall we turn away from the whole matter, and be content to learn of Christ?

Above all masters is the Master. We have no time to study the difficult pages of metaphysical theology; nor have we the trained minds to follow the turnings and the twistings of the argument. Every question which has ever been asked of the Christian religion has its answer. But everybody ought to know what an inevitable difference there is in the element of simplicity between a question and an answer. The smallest child can ask a question in three words to which

the wisest philosopher cannot give an adequate answer in three volumes. That is why the attitude of so many people toward religion is the attitude of the questioner. Because it is so perfectly easy to ask questions, while it is quite often so particularly difficult to understand answers. Let us stop, then, they say, with that which we can comprehend.

But that is what Philip did, and that is just where Philip failed. Philip ought to have trusted for the answer to the Master. If we are wise, if we really do believe that our own understanding is not the absolute measure of existence, and that the limits of our own thinking are not the final boundaries of truth, if we honestly desire to know what is beyond, the most reasonable thing that we can do is just to take the word of Christ. We do not think it necessary to understand all the intricate mathematical calculations which establish the fact that the earth moves. We believe that fact in flat contradiction to the sight of our eyes, because it has been pronounced upon by the scientific masters. Neither is it necessary to understand all the elaborate metaphysical reasonings that go to show that pain and sin can exist in a world which is governed by a holy and omnipotent God. That God loves us seems sometimes to be as flat a contradiction to our experience as that

the earth revolves. But the great spiritual Master has pronounced upon that.

Let us not forget Christ, as Philip did. That was the very heart of his failure, and the secret and explanation of his hasty and self-sufficient answer. He forgot Christ. We must remember him. In all the difficulties that press upon us in our generation, some of them sociological, some of them theological; some touching the problem of poverty, some touching the problem of belief; some tempting us to a hasty answer, others tempting us to a self-sufficient answer; let us find our refuge and our help in the sure word of the Lord Christ.

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